ACADEMY CLASSICS

ESSAY ON JOHNSON

MACAULAY

ALLYN AND BACON

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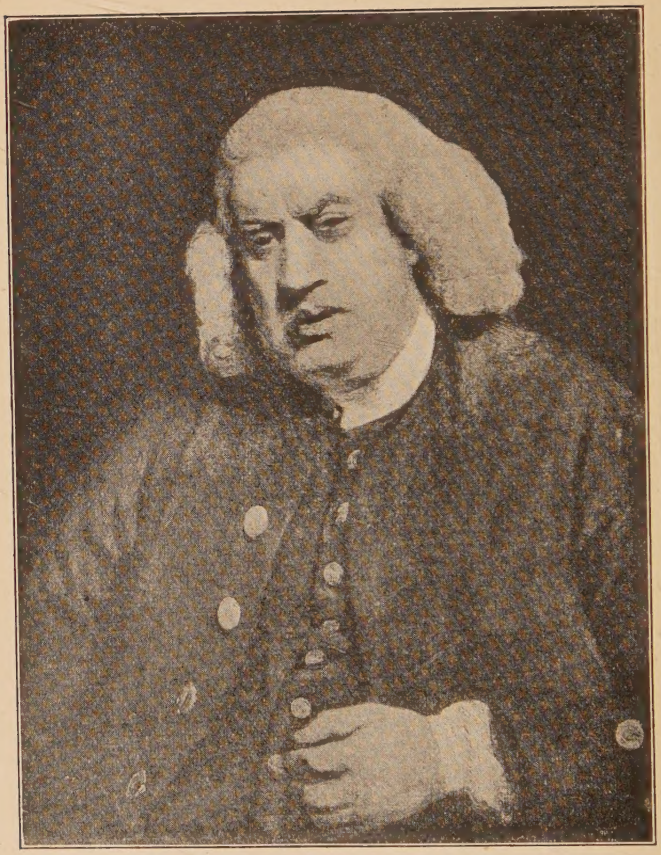

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON
From the painting by Joshua Reynolds.

The Academy Classics

MACAULAY
ESSAY ON JOHNSON

TOGETHER WITH

PASSAGES FROM BOSWELL'S JOHNSON

AND

SELECTIONS FROM JOHNSON'S WORKS

EDITED WITH A LIFE OF MACAULAY
NOTES, GLOSSARY, AND AIDS TO STUDY

BY

SAMUEL THURBER

AND

LOUISE WETHERBEE

NEWTON HIGH SCHOOL

ALLYN AND BACON

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FOREWORD

A STUDY of Macaulay's *Life of Johnson* should mean more than the reading of a masterly biographical sketch. It should introduce the high school student to English literature of the eighteenth century, and especially to that interesting group of men who belonged to the famous Literary Club — Goldsmith, Burke, Boswell, Garrick, Reynolds and all the rest. With this in mind I have included in the present edition of Macaulay's essay numerous selections from Boswell's classic biography and many passages from Johnson's own writings.

As further helps to teachers and students this volume contains, besides the customary notes of explanation, a glossary of difficult and unusual words, a list of subjects for oral and written composition, a number of illustrations of Macaulay's style selected from his essays and History of England, and a few suggestions from the note-book of my experience while teaching boys and girls in both college preparatory and commercial classes.

It is hoped that this material, not ordinarily found in school editions of the *Life of Johnson*, will help the teacher to create in his class a genuine interest in English literature of the age of Goldsmith and Burke.

SAMUEL THURBER

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TO THE TEACHER

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING MACAULAY'S "LIFE OF JOHNSON"

I HAVE always found the study of Macaulay's "Johnson," whether with college preparatory or general course students, one of the most interesting and profitable pieces of work in the senior year. Such has been my experience, I believe, because I have always placed in the background analysis of the essay as a work of literary art, and have never made much of Macaulay's prejudices and errors of judgment. Rather than develop pupils into clever critics of Macaulay's style, I have used the essay, first of all, to introduce boys and girls pleasantly and easily to the great masters of eighteenth century prose who belong to Johnson's circle — to Burke and Goldsmith and Richardson, to Smollett and Reynolds and Boswell. To assist teachers of English who desire to teach the essay in this spirit and with this purpose, I offer the following suggestions from the note-book of my own experience.

1. *The Jessamy Bride.* Secure from the public library — or better still from your own school library — a copy of Frank F. Moore's novel, *The Jessamy Bride.* Before placing Macaulay's essay in the hands of your pupils read to them two or three chapters of this romance. The scene opens at "The Club." Garrick, Goldsmith, Burke, and Johnson are among the *dramatis personæ.* Garrick, by a clever bit of acting, plays an amusing trick on the learned author of the Dictionary. There is merriment and jest. The conversation is interesting and natural. Such a reading gives the right start, for it creates an eighteenth century atmosphere and brings before your class in a genial light the great men about whom they are going to study. Various ways of going on with the novel may be used. One of the best,

I have found, is to lend the story each night to a different student who reports on a single additional chapter at the opening of each recitation while the essay is under consideration.

2. *Dr. Johnson, A Play.* By all means introduce your class to A. Edward Newton's four-act drama *Doctor Johnson*, published by the Atlantic Monthly Press in 1923. This may be used in the same manner as the *Jessamy Bride*, though my own preference has been to save it for the climax of our study of the Johnson period. In one keen section pupils made typewritten copies of Act I, assigned the parts, and at the close of the term put a most realistic Johnsonian scene on the school stage.

3. *Johnson's Works.* Something must be done to make the books that Johnson wrote more than mere names. Macaulay's criticisms are not enough. Bring copies of them to class from the library. If possible, bring them in old editions — the older the better. Let the pupils see the *Gentleman's Magazine* as Londoners of 1739 saw it. Read them a scene from *Irene* or a paper from the *Rambler* or a paragraph from *Rasselas*. Above all, read them some of Johnson's letters and one or two of his prayers.

For the teacher who cannot readily secure Johnson's works I have included in this edition (pages 118–156) those selections which I have most frequently used with my pupils.

4. *Boswell.* Next to Dr. Johnson, of all the members of the Club boys and girls are most interested in James Boswell. While they are studying the essay comes the opportune time to introduce them to the book that Macaulay calls "the most interesting biographical work in the world," which will be "read as long as the English language exists, either as a living or as a dead language." With these stirring words of praise before them, introduce your pupils to "the real thing." Show them an early edition. Read them the account Boswell gives of his introduction to Johnson, or the equally famous narrative of Johnson's interview with George III.

On pages 55–115 will be found a number of selections from Boswell which will add immensely to the interest of a study of Johnson and his times.

5. *Places.* I have never found high school seniors able to visualize the scenes in which Johnson moved — at least, not from a study of Macaulay's essay alone. Pictures are needed — pictures of old London streets and stage-coaches and cathedrals, of the Mitre Tavern, Drury Lane Theatre, London Bridge, and St. John's Gate. Almost every large public library can furnish old cuts and illustrated editions that will add immeasurably to the pleasure of studying the essay.

Some of the pictures which I have found most helpful are included in this volume.

6. *Cross References.* It is while studying Macaulay's Johnson that I have most successfully induced my pupils to undertake a little elementary research work. If not overdone, and if undertaken in the spirit of a real hunt, such research becomes the keenest kind of sport. It takes the student to many books he would otherwise never consult.

Here are a few of the trails which boys and girls of seventeen, at my suggestion, have pursued with pleasure and with profitable results.

A. Where in Shakespeare is the "royal touch" mentioned, and under what circumstances?

B. How did Garrick happen to attend Johnson's school in Lichfield?

C. Has *Irene* ever been put on the stage since 1749? Where? When?

D. Can you find in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1736 an advertisement of Johnson's Lichfield school? Compare it with an advertisement of a private school in a magazine of today.

E. Read and report on the review of Jenyn's *Inquiry* which Macaulay declares is the "best thing Johnson ever wrote."

F. Find the lines in which Churchill "accused the great moralist of cheating."

G. Find and report on the passage in the *Journey to the Hebrides* which proved MacPherson's Fingal "to be an impudent forgery."

H. Read something about Mrs. Thrale's second husband to

see if you agree with Macaulay that he was "an Italian fiddler" in whom "nobody but herself could discover anything to admire."

I. Johnson's will, his funeral, the epitaph on his tomb in Westminster Abbey.

J. Read a portion of *Taxation No Tyranny* to discover Macaulay's reasons for saying that it is the poorest thing Johnson ever wrote. Compare Johnson's attitude toward the American colonies with that of Burke as shown in the great speech on Conciliation.

K. Prepare a paper on the Drury Lane Theatre and other theatres of London in Johnson's time.

L. A most interesting subject to investigate is "Garrick's Repertoire," or the parts played by him in his long stage career.

M. Write a biographical sketch of some one of Johnson's associates — Sir Joshua Reynolds, for instance, or Edward Cave, or Oliver Goldsmith.

N. Read a few passages of Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* to compare it with Johnson's more famous book on the same subject. Which do you prefer and why?

7. *Sentence and Paragraph Imitation*. High school seniors are always quick to catch Macaulay's tricks of balance and antithesis, of short topic sentences developed into orderly paragraphs, of abundant and picturesque illustration. Without dwelling much on the dangers and weaknesses of Macaulay's style, I have found it worth while to assign both sentence and paragraph imitation in theme work while studying the *Life of Johnson*. Especially does this seem the best time in the senior year to emphasize paragraph building, and also paragraph summarizing in one or two well constructed sentences.

On page 181 are several sentences taken from the essay which my students have developed into paragraphs in conscious imitation of Macaulay's style.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Macaulay's Essay on Johnson	1
Selections from Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson	55
Miscellaneous Sayings of Johnson's	115
Selections from Johnson	118
Sketch of Macaulay	157
Examples of Macaulay's Style	171
Subjects for Oral and Written Composition	181
Notes to Macaulay's Essay on Johnson	185
Glossary	215

ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
Dr. Samuel Johnson	*Frontispiece*
The Quadrangle of Pembroke College, Oxford	4
Elizabeth Jervis	8
David Garrick	20
Facsimile Letter by Dr. Johnson	30
Sir Joshua Reynolds	36
Mitre Tavern	40
Lichfield Cathedral	48
James Boswell	57
Lichfield Grammar School	60
Dr. Johnson Reading the Manuscript of Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield"	78
Oliver Goldsmith	90
A Literary Party at the House of Sir Joshua Reynolds	104
Edmund Burke	110
Drury Lane Theatre	122
Thomas Babington Macaulay	157

SAMUEL JOHNSON

(December, 1856)

Samuel Johnson, one of the most eminent English writers of the eighteenth century, was the son of Michael Johnson, who was, at the beginning of that century, a magistrate of Lichfield, and a bookseller of great note in the Midland Counties. Michael's abilities and attainments seem to have been considerable. He was so well acquainted with the contents of the volumes which he exposed to sale, that the country rectors of Staffordshire and Worcestershire thought him an oracle on points of learning. Between him and the clergy, indeed, there was a strong religious and political sympathy. He was a zealous Churchman, and, though he qualified himself for municipal office by taking the oaths to the sovereigns in possession, was to the last a Jacobite in heart. At his house, a house which is still pointed out to every traveller who visits Lichfield, Samuel was born on the 18th of September, 1709. In the child the physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities which afterward distinguished the man were plainly discernible; great muscular strength, accompanied by much awkwardness and many infirmities; great quickness of parts, with a morbid propensity to sloth and procrastination; a kind and generous heart, with a gloomy and irritable temper. He had inherited from his ancestors a scrofulous taint, which it was beyond the power of medicine to remove. His parents were weak enough to believe that the royal touch was a

specific for this malady. In his third year he was taken up to London, inspected by the court surgeon, prayed over by the court chaplains, and stroked and presented with a piece of gold by Queen Anne. One of his earliest recollections was that of a stately lady in a diamond stomacher and a long black hood. Her hand was applied in vain. The boy's features, which were originally noble and not irregular, were distorted by his malady. His cheeks were deeply scarred. He lost for a time the sight of one eye, and saw but very imperfectly with the other. But the force of his mind overcame every impediment. Indolent as he was, he acquired knowledge with such ease and rapidity that at every school to which he was sent he was soon the best scholar. From sixteen to eighteen he resided at home, and was left to his own devices. He learned much at this time, though his studies were without guidance and without plan. He ransacked his father's shelves, dipped into a multitude of books, read what was interesting, and passed over what was dull. An ordinary lad would have acquired little or no useful knowledge in such a way; but much that was dull to ordinary lads was interesting to Samuel. He read little Greek; for his proficiency in that language was not such that he could take much pleasure in the masters of Attic poetry and eloquence. But he had left school a good Latinist, and he soon acquired, in the large and miscellaneous library of which he now had the command, an extensive knowledge of Latin literature. That Augustan delicacy of taste, which is the boast of the great public schools of England, he never possessed.

But he was early familiar with some classical writers who were quite unknown to the best scholars in the sixth form at Eton. He was peculiarly attracted by the works of the great restorers of learning. Once, while searching for some apples, he found a huge folio volume of Petrarch's works. The name excited his curiosity and he eagerly devoured hundreds of pages. Indeed, the diction and versification of his own Latin compositions show that he had paid at least as much attention to modern copies from the antique as to the original models.

While he was thus irregularly educating himself, his family was sinking into hopeless poverty. Old Michael Johnson was much better qualified to pore over books, and to talk about them, than to trade in them. His business declined; his debts increased; it was with difficulty that the daily expenses of his household were defrayed. It was out of his power to support his son at either university; but a wealthy neighbor offered assistance, and, in reliance on promises which proved to be of very little value, Samuel was entered at Pembroke College, Oxford. When the young scholar presented himself to the rulers of that society, they were amazed not more by his ungainly figure and eccentric manners than by the quantity of extensive and curious information which he had picked up during many months of desultory, but not unprofitable, study. On the first day of his residence he surprised his teachers by quoting Macrobius; and one of the most learned among them declared that he had never known a freshman of equal attainments.

At Oxford Johnson resided during about three years. He was poor, even to raggedness; and his appearance excited a mirth and a pity which were equally intolerable to his haughty spirit. He was driven from the quadrangle of Christ Church by the sneering looks which the members of that aristocratical society cast at the holes in his shoes. Some charitable person placed a new pair at his door, but he spurned them away in a fury. Distress made him, not servile, but reckless and ungovernable. No opulent gentleman commoner, panting for one-and-twenty, could have treated the academical authorities with more gross disrespect. The needy scholar was generally to be seen under the gate of Pembroke, a gate now adorned with his effigy, haranguing a circle of lads, over whom, in spite of his tattered gown and dirty linen, his wit and audacity gave him an undisputed ascendency. In every mutiny against the discipline of the college he was the ringleader. Much was pardoned, however, to a youth so highly distinguished by abilities and acquirements. He had early made himself known by turning Pope's Messiah into Latin verse. The style and rhythm, indeed, were not exactly Virgilian, but the translation found many admirers, and was read with pleasure by Pope himself.

The time drew near at which Johnson would, in the ordinary course of things, have become a Bachelor of Arts: but he was at the end of his resources. Those promises of support on which he had relied had not been kept. His family could do nothing for him. His debts to Oxford tradesmen were small indeed, yet

THE QUADRANGLE OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD

Johnson's room was on the second floor over the gateway.

larger than he could pay. In the autumn of 1731 he was under the necessity of quitting the university without a degree. In the following winter his father died. The old man left but a pittance, and of that pittance almost the whole was appropriated to the support of his widow. The property to which Samuel succeeded amounted to no more than twenty pounds.

His life, during the thirty years which followed, was one hard struggle with poverty. The misery of that struggle needed no aggravation, but was aggravated by the sufferings of an unsound body and an unsound mind. Before the young man left the university, his hereditary malady had broken forth in a singularly cruel form. He had become an incurable hypochondriac. He said long after that he had been mad all his life, or at least not perfectly sane; and, in truth, eccentricities less strange than his have often been thought grounds sufficient for absolving felons, and for setting aside wills. His grimaces, his gestures, his mutterings, sometimes diverted and sometimes terrified people who did not know him. At a dinner-table he would, in a fit of absence, stoop down and twitch off a lady's shoe. He would amaze a drawing-room by suddenly ejaculating a clause of the Lord's Prayer. He would conceive an unintelligible aversion to a particular alley, and perform a great circuit rather than see the hateful place. He would set his heart on touching every post in the streets through which he walked. If by any chance he missed a post, he would go back a hundred yards and repair the omission. Under the influence of his disease, his senses became morbidly

torpid and his imagination morbidly active. At one time he would stand poring on the town clock without being able to tell the hour. At another, he would distinctly hear his mother, who was many miles off, calling him by his name. But this was not the worst. A deep melancholy took possession of him, and gave a dark tinge to all his views of human nature and of human destiny. Such wretchedness as he endured has driven many men to shoot themselves or drown themselves; but he was under no temptation to commit suicide. He was sick of life, but he was afraid of death; and he shuddered at every sight or sound which reminded him of the inevitable hour. In religion he found but little comfort during his long and frequent fits of dejection, for his religion partook of his own character. The light from heaven shone on him indeed, but not in a direct line, or with its own pure splendor. The rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium; they reached him refracted, dulled, and discolored by the thick gloom which had settled on his soul; and, though they might be sufficiently clear to guide him, were too dim to cheer him.

With such infirmities of body and of mind, this celebrated man was left, at two-and-twenty, to fight his way through the world. He remained during about five years in the midland counties. At Lichfield, his birthplace and his early home, he had inherited some friends and acquired others. He was kindly noticed by Henry Hervey, a gay officer of noble family, who happened to be quartered there. Gilbert Walmesley, registrar of the ecclesiastical court of the diocese, a

man of distinguished parts, learning, and knowledge of the world, did himself honor by patronizing the young adventurer, whose repulsive person, unpolished manners, and squalid garb moved many of the petty aristocracy of the neighborhood to laughter or to disgust. At Lichfield, however, Johnson could find no way of earning a livelihood. He became usher of a grammar school in Leicestershire; he resided as a humble companion in the house of a country gentleman; but a life of dependence was insupportable to his haughty spirit. He repaired to Birmingham, and there earned a few guineas by literary drudgery. In that town he printed a translation, little noticed at the time, and long forgotten, of a Latin book about Abyssinia. He then put forth proposals for publishing by subscription the poems of Politian, with notes containing a history of modern Latin verse; but subscriptions did not come in, and the volume never appeared.

While leading this vagrant and miserable life, Johnson fell in love. The object of his passion was Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a widow who had children as old as himself. To ordinary spectators, the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colors, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys and Lepels. To Johnson, however, whose passions were strong, whose eyesight was too weak to distinguish ceruse from natural bloom, and who had seldom or never been in the same room with a woman of real fashion, his Titty, as he called

her, was the most beautiful, graceful, and accomplished of her sex. That his admiration was unfeigned cannot be doubted, for she was as poor as himself. She accepted, with a readiness which did her little honor, the addresses of a suitor who might have been her son. The marriage, however, in spite of occasional wranglings, proved happier than might have been expected. The lover continued to be under the illusions of the wedding-day till the lady died in her sixty-fourth year. On her monument he placed an inscription, extolling the charms of her person and of her manners; and when, long after her decease, he had occasion to mention her, he exclaimed, with a tenderness half ludicrous, half pathetic, "Pretty creature!"

His marriage made it necessary for him to exert himself more strenuously than he had hitherto done. He took a house in the neighborhood of his native town, and advertised for pupils. But eighteen months passed away, and only three pupils came to his academy. Indeed, his appearance was so strange, and his temper so violent, that his school-room must have resembled an ogre's den. Nor was the tawdry painted grandmother whom he called his Titty well qualified to make provision for the comfort of young gentlemen. David Garrick, who was one of the pupils, used, many years later, to throw the best company of London into convulsions of laughter by mimicking the endearments of this extraordinary pair.

At length Johnson, in the twenty-eighth year of his age, determined to seek his fortune in the capital as a literary adventurer. He set out with a few guineas,

Elizabeth Jervis Porter

Mrs. Porter (1688–1752) became the wife of Johnson on July 9, 1735.

three acts of the tragedy of Irene in manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction from his friend Walmesley.

Never since literature became a calling in England had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London. In the preceding generation a writer of eminent merit was sure to be munificently rewarded by the Government. The least that he could expect was a pension or a sinecure place; and, if he showed any aptitude for politics, he might hope to be a Member of Parliament, a lord of the treasury, an ambassador, a secretary of state. It would be easy, on the other hand, to name several writers of the nineteenth century of whom the least successful has received forty thousand pounds from the booksellers. But Johnson entered on his vocation in the most dreary part of the dreary interval which separated two ages of prosperity. Literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public. One man of letters, indeed, Pope, had acquired by his pen what was then considered as a handsome fortune, and lived on a footing of equality with nobles and ministers of State. But this was a solitary exception. Even an author whose reputation was established, and whose works were popular, such an author as Thomson, whose Seasons were in every library, such an author as Fielding, whose Pasquin had had a greater run than any drama since The Beggar's Opera, was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe at a cook-

shop under ground, where he could wipe his hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment measured with a scornful eye that athletic though uncouth frame, and exclaimed, "You had better get a porter's knot, and carry trunks." Nor was the advice bad, for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed, and as comfortably lodged, as a poet.

Some time appears to have elapsed before Johnson was able to form any literary connection from which he could expect more than bread for the day which was passing over him. He never forgot the generosity with which Hervey, who was now residing in London, relieved his wants during this time of trial. "Harry Hervey," said the old philosopher many years later, "was a vicious man; but he was very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him." At Hervey's table Johnson sometimes enjoyed feasts which were made more agreeable by contrast. But in general he dined, and thought that he dined well, on sixpennyworth of meat and a pennyworth of bread at an alehouse near Drury Lane.

The effect of the privations and sufferings which he endured at this time was discernible to the last in his temper and his deportment. His manners had never been courtly; they now became almost savage. Being frequently under the necessity of wearing shabby coats and dirty shirts, he became a confirmed sloven.

Being often very hungry when he sat down to his meals, he contracted a habit of eating with ravenous greediness. Even to the end of his life, and even at the tables of the great, the sight of food affected him as it affects wild beasts and birds of prey. His taste in cookery, formed in subterranean ordinaries and *alamode* beef-shops, was far from delicate. Whenever he was so fortunate as to have near him a hare that had been kept too long, or a meat pie made with rancid butter, he gorged himself with such violence that his veins swelled, and the moisture broke out on his forehead. The affronts which his poverty emboldened stupid and low-minded men to offer to him would have broken a mean spirit into sycophancy, but made him rude even to ferocity. Unhappily, the insolence which, while it was defensive, was pardonable, and in some sense respectable, accompanied him into societies where he was treated with courtesy and kindness. He was repeatedly provoked into striking those who had taken liberties with him. All the sufferers, however, were wise enough to abstain from talking about their beatings, except Osborne, the most rapacious and brutal of booksellers, who proclaimed everywhere that he had been knocked down by the huge fellow whom he had hired to puff the Harleian Library.

About a year after Johnson had begun to reside in London, he was fortunate enough to obtain regular employment from Cave, an enterprising and intelligent bookseller, who was proprietor and editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. That journal, just entering on the ninth year of its long existence, was the only

periodical work in the kingdom which then had what would now be called a large circulation. It was, indeed, the chief source of parliamentary intelligence. It was not then safe, even during a recess, to publish an account of the proceedings of either House without some disguise. Cave, however, ventured to entertain his readers with what he called "Reports of the Debates of the Senate of Lilliput." France was Blefuscu; London was Mildendo; pounds were sprugs; the Duke of Newcastle was the Nardac Secretary of State; Lord Hardwicke was the Hurgo Hickrad; and William Pulteney was Wingul Pulnub. To write the speeches was, during several years, the business of Johnson. He was generally furnished with notes, meagre indeed, and inaccurate, of what had been said; but sometimes he had to find arguments and eloquence both for the ministry and for the opposition. He was himself a Tory, not from rational conviction — for his serious opinion was that one form of government was just as good or as bad as another — but from mere passion, such as inflamed the Capulets against the Montagues, or the Blues of the Roman circus against the Greens. In his infancy he had heard so much talk about the villanies of the Whigs, and the dangers of the Church, that he had become a furious partisan when he could scarcely speak. Before he was three, he had insisted on being taken to hear Sacheverell preach at Lichfield cathedral, and had listened to the sermon with as much respect, and probably with as much intelligence, as any Staffordshire squire in the congregation. The work which had been begun in the nursery had been com-

pleted by the university. Oxford, when Johnson resided there, was the most Jacobitical place in England, and Pembroke was one of the most Jacobitical colleges in Oxford. The prejudices which he brought up to London were scarcely less absurd than those of his own Tom Tempest. Charles the Second and James the Second were two of the best kings that ever reigned. Laud, a poor creature who never did, said, or wrote anything indicating more than the ordinary capacity of an old woman, was a prodigy of parts and learning, over whose tomb Art and Genius still continued to weep. Hampden deserved no more honorable name than that of "the zealot of rebellion." Even the ship-money, condemned not less decidedly by Falkland and Clarendon than by the bitterest Roundheads, Johnson would not pronounce to have been an unconstitutional impost. Under a government the mildest that had ever been known in the world — under a government which allowed to the people an unprecedented liberty of speech and action — he fancied that he was a slave; he assailed the ministry with obloquy which refuted itself, and regretted the lost freedom and happiness of those golden days in which a writer who had taken but one-tenth part of the license allowed to him would have been pilloried, mangled with the shears, whipped at the cart's-tail, and flung into a noisome dungeon to die. He hated dissenters and stock-jobbers, the excise and the army, septennial parliaments and Continental connections. He long had an aversion to the Scotch, an aversion of which he could not remember the commencement,

but which, he owned, had probably originated in his abhorrence of the conduct of the nation during the Great Rebellion. It is easy to guess in what manner debates on great party questions were likely to be reported by a man whose judgment was so much disordered by party spirit. A show of fairness was indeed necessary to the prosperity of the magazine; but Johnson long afterward owned that, though he had saved appearances, he had taken care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it; and, in fact, every passage which has lived, every passage which bears the marks of his higher faculties, is put into the mouth of some member of the opposition.

A few weeks after Johnson had entered on these obscure labors, he published a work which at once placed him high among the writers of his age. It is probable that what he had suffered during his first year in London had often reminded him of some parts of that noble poem in which Juvenal had described the misery and degradation of a needy man of letters, lodged among the pigeons' nests in the tottering garrets which overhung the streets of Rome. Pope's admirable imitations of Horace's satires and epistles had recently appeared, were in every hand, and were by many readers thought superior to the originals. What Pope had done for Horace, Johnson aspired to do for Juvenal. The enterprise was bold, and yet judicious. For between Johnson and Juvenal there was much in common, much more, certainly, than between Pope and Horace.

Johnson's "London" appeared, without his name,

in May, 1738. He received only ten guineas for this stately and vigorous poem; but the sale was rapid and the success complete. A second edition was required within a week. Those small critics who are always desirous to lower established reputations ran about proclaiming that the anonymous satirist was superior to Pope in Pope's own peculiar department of literature. It ought to be remembered, to the honor of Pope, that he joined heartily in the applause with which the appearance of a rival genius was welcomed. He made inquiries about the author of London. Such a man, he said, could not long be concealed. The name was soon discovered; and Pope, with great kindness, exerted himself to obtain an academical degree and the mastership of a grammar school for the poor young poet. The attempt failed, and Johnson remained a bookseller's hack.

It does not appear that these two men, the most eminent writer of the generation which was going out, and the most eminent writer of the generation which was coming in, ever saw each other. They lived in very different circles, one surrounded by dukes and earls, the other by starving pamphleteers and index-makers. Among Johnson's associates at this time may be mentioned Boyse, who, when his shirts were pledged, scrawled Latin verses sitting up in bed with his arms through two holes in his blanket; who composed very respectable sacred poetry when he was sober, and who was at last run over by a hackney-coach when he was drunk: Hoole, surnamed the metaphysical tailor, who, instead of attending to his measures, used to

trace geometrical diagrams on the board where he sat cross-legged: and the penitent impostor George Psalmanazar, who, after poring all day, in a humble lodging, on the folios of Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers, indulged himself at night with literary and theological conversation at an ale-house in the City. But the most remarkable of the persons with whom at this time Johnson consorted was Richard Savage, an earl's son, a shoemaker's apprentice, who had seen life in all its forms, who had feasted among blue ribbons in St. James's Square, and had lain with fifty pounds' weight of irons on his legs in the condemned ward of Newgate. This man had, after many vicissitudes of fortune, sunk at last into abject and hopeless poverty. His pen had failed him. His patrons had been taken away by death, or estranged by the riotous profusion with which he squandered their bounty, and the ungrateful insolence with which he rejected their advice. He now lived by begging. He dined on venison and champagne whenever he had been so fortunate as to borrow a guinea. If his questing had been unsuccessful, he appeased the rage of hunger with some scraps of broken meat, and lay down to rest under the piazza of Covent Garden in warm weather, and, in cold weather, as near as he could get to the furnace of a glass-house. Yet, in his misery, he was still an agreeable companion. He had an inexhaustible store of anecdotes about that gay and brilliant world from which he was now an outcast. He had observed the great men of both parties in hours of careless relaxation, had seen the leaders of opposition without the mask of patriotism, and had

heard the prime minister roar with laughter and tell stories not over-decent. During some months Savage lived in the closest familiarity with Johnson; and then the friends parted, not without tears. Johnson remained in London to drudge for Cave; Savage went to the West of England, lived there as he had lived everywhere, and, in 1743, died, penniless and heart-broken, in Bristol jail.

Soon after his death, while the public curiosity was strongly excited about his extraordinary character and his not less extraordinary adventures, a life of him appeared, widely different from the catchpenny lives of eminent men which were then a staple article of manufacture in Grub Street. The style was indeed deficient in ease and variety; and the writer was evidently too partial to the Latin element of our language. But the little work, with all its faults, was a masterpiece. No finer specimen of literary biography existed in any language, living or dead; and a discerning critic might have confidently predicted that the author was destined to be the founder of a new school of English eloquence.

The Life of Savage was anonymous; but it was well known in literary circles that Johnson was the writer. During the three years which followed, he produced no important work; but he was not, and indeed could not be, idle. The fame of his abilities and learning continued to grow. Warburton pronounced him a man of parts and genius; and the praise of Warburton was then no light thing. Such was Johnson's reputation that, in 1747, several eminent booksellers com-

bined to employ him in the arduous work of preparing a Dictionary of the English Language, in two folio volumes. The sum which they agreed to pay him was only fifteen hundred guineas; and out of this sum he had to pay several poor men of letters who assisted him in the humbler parts of his task.

The prospectus of the Dictionary he addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield. Chesterfield had long been celebrated for the politeness of his manners, the brilliancy of his wit, and the delicacy of his taste. He was acknowledged to be the finest speaker in the House of Lords. He had recently governed Ireland, at a momentous conjuncture, with eminent firmness, wisdom, and humanity, and he had since become Secretary of State. He received Johnson's homage with the most winning affability, and requited it with a few guineas, bestowed doubtless in a very graceful manner, but was by no means desirous to see all his carpets blackened with the London mud, and his soups and wines thrown to right and left over the gowns of fine ladies and the waistcoats of fine gentlemen, by an absent, awkward scholar, who gave strange starts and uttered strange growls, who dressed like a scarecrow and ate like a cormorant. During some time Johnson continued to call on his patron, but, after being repeatedly told by the porter that his lordship was not at home, took the hint, and ceased to present himself at the inhospitable door.

Johnson had flattered himself that he should have completed his Dictionary by the end of 1750; but it was not till 1755 that he at length gave his huge vol-

umes to the world. During the seven years which he passed in the drudgery of penning definitions and marking quotations for transcription, he sought for relaxation in literary labor of a more agreeable kind. In 1749 he published the Vanity of Human Wishes, an excellent imitation of the tenth satire of Juvenal. It is, in truth, not easy to say whether the palm belongs to the ancient or to the modern poet. The couplets in which the fall of Wolsey is described, though lofty and sonorous, are feeble when compared with the wonderful lines which bring before us all Rome in tumult on the day of the fall of Sejanus, the laurels on the doorposts, the white bull stalking towards the Capitol, the statues rolling down from their pedestals, the flatterers of the disgraced minister running to see him dragged with a hook through the streets, and to have a kick at his carcass before it is hurled into the Tiber. It must be owned too that in the concluding passage the Christian moralist has not made the most of his advantages, and has fallen decidedly short of the sublimity of his Pagan model. On the other hand, Juvenal's Hannibal must yield to Johnson's Charles; and Johnson's vigorous and pathetic enumeration of the miseries of a literary life must be allowed to be superior to Juvenal's lamentation over the fate of Demosthenes and Cicero.

For the copyright of the Vanity of Human Wishes Johnson received only fifteen guineas.

A few days after the publication of this poem, his tragedy, begun many years before, was brought on the stage. His pupil, David Garrick, had, in 1741, made

his appearance on a humble stage in Goodman's Fields, had at once risen to the first place among actors, and was now, after several years of almost uninterrupted success, manager of Drury Lane Theatre. The relation between him and his old preceptor was of a very singular kind. They repelled each other strongly, and yet attracted each other strongly. Nature had made them of very different clay, and circumstances had fully brought out the natural peculiarities of both. Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper. Johnson saw with more envy than became so great a man the villa, the plate, the china, the Brussels carpet which the little mimic had got by repeating, with grimaces and gesticulations, what wiser men had written; and the exquisitely sensitive vanity of Garrick was galled by the thought that, while all the rest of the world was applauding him, he could obtain from one morose cynic, whose opinion it was impossible to despise, scarcely any compliment not acidulated with scorn. Yet the two Lichfield men had so many early recollections in common, and sympathized with each other on so many points on which they sympathized with nobody else in the vast population of the capital, that, though the master was often provoked by the monkey-like impertinence of the pupil, and the pupil by the bearish rudeness of the master, they remained friends till they were parted by death. Garrick now brought Irene out, with alterations sufficient to displease the author, yet not sufficient to make the piece pleasing to the audience. The public, however, listened with

DAVID GARRICK

In the character of "Kitely" (Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*).

little emotion, but with much civility, to five acts of monotonous declamation. After nine representations the play was withdrawn. It is, indeed, altogether unsuited to the stage, and, even when perused in the closet, will be found hardly worthy of the author. He had not the slightest notion of what blank verse should be. A change in the last syllable of every other line would make the versification of the Vanity of Human Wishes closely resemble the versification of Irene. The poet, however, cleared, by his benefit nights, and by the sale of the copyright of his tragedy, about three hundred pounds, then a great sum in his estimation.

About a year after the representation of Irene, he began to publish a series of short essays on morals, manners, and literature. This species of composition had been brought into fashion by the success of The Tatler, and by the still more brilliant success of The Spectator. A crowd of small writers had vainly attempted to rival Addison. *The Lay Monastery*, *The Censor*, *The Freethinker*, *The Plain Dealer*, *The Champion*, and other works of the same kind, had had their short day. None of them had obtained a permanent place in our literature; and they are now to be found only in the libraries of the curious. At length Johnson undertook the adventure in which so many aspirants had failed. In the thirty-sixth year after the appearance of the last number of The Spectator appeared the first number of The Rambler. From March 1750 to March 1752, this paper continued to come out every Tuesday and Saturday.

From the first, The Rambler was enthusiastically

admired by a few eminent men. Richardson, when only five numbers had appeared, pronounced it equal, if not superior, to The Spectator. Young and Hartley expressed their approbation not less warmly. Bubb Dodington, among whose many faults indifference to the claims of genius and learning cannot be reckoned, solicited the acquaintance of the writer. In consequence, probably, of the good offices of Dodington, who was then the confidential adviser of Prince Frederic, two of his royal highness's gentlemen carried a gracious message to the printing-office, and ordered seven copies for Leicester House. But these overtures seem to have been very coldly received. Johnson had had enough of the patronage of the great to last him all his life, and was not disposed to haunt any other door as he had haunted the door of Chesterfield.

By the public The Rambler was at first very coldly received. Though the price of a number was only twopence, the sale did not amount to five hundred. The profits were therefore very small. But as soon as the flying leaves were collected and reprinted, they became popular. The author lived to see thirteen thousand copies spread over England alone. Separate editions were published for the Scotch and Irish markets. A large party pronounced the style perfect, so absolutely perfect that in some essays it would be impossible for the writer himself to alter a single word for the better. Another party, not less numerous, vehemently accused him of having corrupted the purity of the English tongue. The best critics ad-

mitted that his diction was too monotonous, too obviously artificial, and now and then turgid even to absurdity. But they did justice to the acuteness of his observations on morals and manners, to the constant precision and frequent brilliancy of his language, to the weighty and magnificent eloquence of many serious passages, and to the solemn yet pleasing humor of some of the lighter papers. On the question of precedence between Addison and Johnson, a question which, seventy years ago, was much disputed, posterity has pronounced a decision from which there is no appeal. Sir Roger, his chaplain and his butler, Will Wimble and Will Honeycomb, the Vision of Mirza, the Journal of the Retired Citizen, the Everlasting Club, the Dunmow Flitch, the Loves of Hilpah and Shalum, the Visit to the Exchange, and the Visit to the Abbey, are known to everybody. But many men and women, even of highly cultivated minds, are unacquainted with Squire Bluster and Mrs. Busy, Quisquilius and Venustulus, the Allegory of Wit and Learning, the Chronicle of the Revolutions of a Garret, and the sad fate of Aningait and Ajut.

The last Rambler was written in a sad and gloomy hour. Mrs. Johnson had been given over by the physicians. Three days later she died. She left her husband almost broken-hearted. Many people had been surprised to see a man of his genius and learning stooping to every drudgery, and denying himself almost every comfort, for the purpose of supplying a silly, affected old woman with superfluities which she accepted with but little gratitude. But all his affec-

tion had been concentrated on her. He had neither brother nor sister, neither son nor daughter. To him she was beautiful as the Gunnings, and witty as Lady Mary. Her opinion of his writings was more important to him than the voice of the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, or the judgment of the Monthly Review. The chief support which had sustained him through the most arduous labor of his life was the hope that she would enjoy the fame and the profit which he anticipated from his Dictionary. She was gone; and in that vast labyrinth of streets, peopled by eight hundred thousand human beings, he was alone. Yet it was necessary for him to set himself, as he expressed it, doggedly to work. After three more laborious years, the Dictionary was at length complete.

It had been generally supposed that this great work would be dedicated to the eloquent and accomplished nobleman to whom the prospectus had been addressed. He well knew the value of such a compliment; and therefore, when the day of publication drew near, he exerted himself to soothe, by a show of zealous and at the same time of delicate and judicious kindness, the pride which he had so cruelly wounded. Since the Ramblers had ceased to appear, the town had been entertained by a journal called The World, to which many men of high rank and fashion contributed. In two successive numbers of The World, the Dictionary was, to use the modern phrase, puffed with wonderful skill. The writings of Johnson were warmly praised. It was proposed that he should be invested with the authority of a dictator, nay, of a pope, over our lan-

guage, and that his decisions about the meaning and the spelling of words should be received as final. His two folios, it was said, would of course be bought by everybody who could afford to buy them. It was soon known that these papers were written by Chesterfield. But the just resentment of Johnson was not to be so appeased. In a letter written with singular energy and dignity of thought and language, he repelled the tardy advances of his patron. The Dictionary came forth without a dedication. In the preface the author truly declared that he owed nothing to the great, and described the difficulties with which he had been left to struggle so forcibly and pathetically that the ablest and most malevolent of all the enemies of his fame, Horne Tooke, never could read that passage without tears.

The public, on this occasion, did Johnson full justice, and something more than justice. The best lexicographer may well be content if his productions are received by the world with cold esteem. But Johnson's Dictionary was hailed with an enthusiasm such as no similar work has ever excited. It was indeed the first dictionary which could be read with pleasure. The definitions show so much acuteness of thought and command of language, and the passages quoted from poets, divines, and philosophers are so skilfully selected, that a leisure hour may always be very agreeably spent in turning over the pages. The faults of the book resolve themselves, for the most part, into one great fault. Johnson was a wretched etymologist. He knew little or nothing of

any Teutonic language except English, which indeed, as he wrote it, was scarcely a Teutonic language; and thus he was absolutely at the mercy of Junius and Skinner.

The Dictionary, though it raised Johnson's fame, added nothing to his pecuniary means. The fifteen hundred guineas which the booksellers had agreed to pay him had been advanced and spent before the last sheets issued from the press. It is painful to relate that, twice in the course of the year which followed the publication of this great work, he was arrested and carried to spunging-houses, and that he was twice indebted for his liberty to his excellent friend Richardson. It was still necessary for the man who had been formally saluted by the highest authority as dictator of the English language to supply his wants by constant toil. He abridged his Dictionary. He proposed to bring out an edition of Shakspeare by subscription, and many subscribers sent in their names and laid down their money; but he soon found the task so little to his taste that he turned to more attractive employments. He contributed many papers to a new monthly journal, which was called the Literary Magazine. Few of these papers have much interest; but among them was the very best thing that he ever wrote, a masterpiece both of reasoning and of satirical pleasantry, the review of Jenyns's Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil.

In the spring of 1758 Johnson put forth the first of a series of essays, entitled The Idler. During two years these essays continued to appear weekly. They

were eagerly read, widely circulated, and, indeed, impudently pirated while they were still in the original form, and had a large sale when collected into volumes. The Idler may be described as a second part of The Rambler, somewhat livelier and somewhat weaker than the first part.

While Johnson was busied with his Idlers, his mother, who had accomplished her ninetieth year, died at Lichfield. It was long since he had seen her; but he had not failed to contribute largely out of his small means to her comfort. In order to defray the charges of her funeral, and to pay some debts which she had left, he wrote a little book in a single week, and sent off the sheets to the press without reading them over. A hundred pounds were paid him for the copyright; and the purchasers had great cause to be pleased with their bargain; for the book was Rasselas.

The success of Rasselas was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Languish must have been grievously disappointed when they found that the new volume from the circulating library was little more than a dissertation on the author's favorite theme, the Vanity of Human Wishes; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the Princess without a lover; and that the story set the hero and the heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The style was the subject of much eager controversy. The Monthly Review and the Critical Review took different sides. Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could

not make a waiting-woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun, and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendor. And both the censure and the praise were merited.

About the plan of Rasselas little was said by the critics; and yet the faults of the plan might seem to invite severe criticism. Johnson has frequently blamed Shakspeare for neglecting the proprieties of time and place, and for ascribing to one age or nation the manners and opinions of another. Yet Shakspeare has not sinned in this way more grievously than Johnson. Rasselas and Imlac, Nekayah and Pekuah, are evidently meant to be Abyssinians of the eighteenth century; for the Europe which Imlac describes is the Europe of the eighteenth century; and the inmates of the Happy Valley talk familiarly of that law of gravitation which Newton discovered, and which was not fully received even at Cambridge till the eighteenth century. What a real company of Abyssinians would have been may be learned from Bruce's Travels. But Johnson, not content with turning filthy savages, ignorant of their letters, and gorged with raw steaks cut from living cows, into philosophers as eloquent and enlightened as himself or his friend Burke, and into ladies as highly accomplished as Mrs. Lennox or Mrs. Sheridan, transferred the whole domestic system of England to Egypt. Into a land of harems, a land of polygamy, a land where women are married

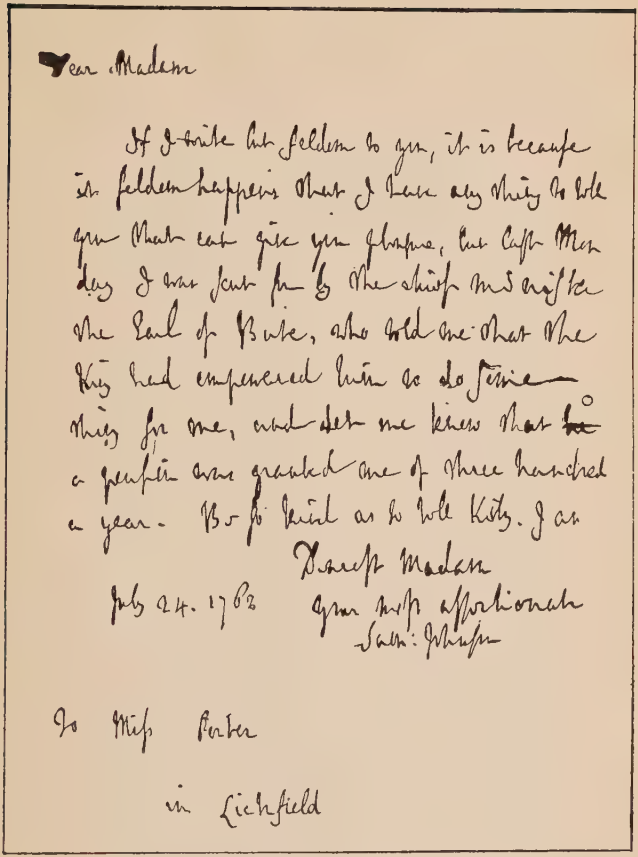
without ever being seen, he introduced the flirtations and jealousies of our ballrooms. In a land where there is boundless liberty of divorce, wedlock is described as the indissoluble compact. "A youth and maiden meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home, and dream of each other. Such," says Rasselas, "is the common process of marriage." Such it may have been, and may still be, in London, but assuredly not at Cairo. A writer who was guilty of such improprieties had little right to blame the poet who made Hector quote Aristotle, and represented Julio Romano as flourishing in the days of the oracle of Delphi.

By such exertions as have been described, Johnson supported himself till the year 1762. In that year a great change in his circumstances took place. He had from a child been an enemy of the reigning dynasty. His Jacobite prejudices had been exhibited with little disguise both in his works and in his conversation. Even in his massy and elaborate Dictionary, he had, with a strange want of taste and judgment, inserted bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party. The excise, which was a favorite resource of Whig financiers, he had designated as a hateful tax. He had railed against the commissioners of excise in language so coarse that they had seriously thought of prosecuting him. He had with difficulty been prevented from holding up the Lord Privy Seal by name as an example of the meaning of the word "renegade." A pension he had defined as pay given to a state hireling to betray his country; a pensioner, as a slave of

state hired by a stipend to obey a master. It seemed unlikely that the author of these definitions would himself be pensioned. But that was a time of wonders. George the Third had ascended the throne; and had, in the course of a few months, disgusted many of the old friends and conciliated many of the old enemies of his house. The city was becoming mutinous. Oxford was becoming loyal. Cavendishes and Bentincks were murmuring. Somersets and Wyndhams were hastening to kiss hands. The head of the treasury was now Lord Bute, who was a Tory, and could have no objection to Johnson's Toryism. Bute wished to be thought a patron of men of letters; and Johnson was one of the most eminent and one of the most needy men of letters in Europe. A pension of three hundred a year was graciously offered, and with very little hesitation accepted.

This event produced a change in Johnson's whole way of life. For the first time since his boyhood he no longer felt the daily goad urging him to the daily toil. He was at liberty, after thirty years of anxiety and drudgery, to indulge his constitutional indolence, to lie in bed till two in the afternoon, and to sit up talking till four in the morning, without fearing either the printer's devil or the sheriff's officer.

One laborious task indeed he had bound himself to perform. He had received large subscriptions for his promised edition of Shakspeare; he had lived on those subscriptions during some years; and he could not without disgrace omit to perform his part of the contract. His friends repeatedly exhorted him to make an



Dear Madam

If I write but seldom to you, it is because it seldom happens that I have any thing to tell you that can give you pleasure, but last Monday I was sent for by the chief Minister the Earl of Bute, who told me that the King had empowered him to do some thing for me, and bid me know what a pension was granted me of three hundred a year. But for that as he told Kitty. I am

Dearest Madam
your most affectionate
Sam: Johnson

July 24. 1762

To Miss Porter

in Lichfield

FACSIMILE LETTER OF DR. JOHNSON

It was addressed to his step-daughter, Lucy Porter, acquainting her of the pension of three hundred pounds a year conferred on him by George III.

effort, and he repeatedly resolved to do so. But, notwithstanding their exhortations and his resolutions, month followed month, year followed year, and nothing was done. He prayed fervently against his idleness; he determined, as often as he received the sacrament, that he would no longer doze away and trifle away his time; but the spell under which he lay resisted prayer and sacrament. His private notes at this time are made up of self-reproaches. "My indolence," he wrote on Easter-eve in 1764, "has sunk into grosser sluggishness. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year." Easter 1765 came, and found him still in the same state. "My time," he wrote, "has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me." Happily for his honor, the charm which held him captive was at length broken by no gentle or friendly hand. He had been weak enough to pay serious attention to a story about a ghost which haunted a house in Cock Lane, and had actually gone himself, with some of his friends, at one in the morning, to St. John's Church, Clerkenwell, in the hope of receiving a communication from the perturbed spirit. But the spirit, though adjured with all solemnity, remained obstinately silent; and it soon appeared that a naughty girl of eleven had been amusing herself by making fools of so many philosophers. Churchill, who, confident in his powers, drunk with popularity, and burning with party spirit, was looking for some

man of established fame and Tory politics to insult, celebrated the Cock Lane Ghost in three cantos, nicknamed Johnson "Pomposo," asked where the book was which had been so long promised and so liberally paid for, and directly accused the great moralist of cheating. This terrible word proved effectual; and in October 1765 appeared, after a delay of nine years, the new edition of Shakspeare.

This publication saved Johnson's character for honesty, but added nothing to the fame of his abilities and learning. The preface, though it contains some good passages, is not in his best manner. The most valuable notes are those in which he had an opportunity of showing how attentively he had during many years observed human life and human nature. The best specimen is the note on the character of Polonius. Nothing so good is to be found even in Wilhelm Meister's admirable examination of Hamlet. But here praise must end. It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless, edition of any great classic. The reader may turn over play after play without finding one happy conjectural emendation, or one ingenious and satisfactory explanation of a passage which had baffled preceding commentators. Johnson had, in his Prospectus, told the world that he was peculiarly fitted for the task which he had undertaken, because he had, as a lexicographer, been under the necessity of taking a wider view of the English language than any of his predecessors. That his knowledge of our literature was extensive is indisputable. But, unfortunately, he had altogether neglected that very part of our lit-

erature with which it is especially desirable that an editor of Shakspeare should be conversant. It is dangerous to assert a negative. Yet little will be risked by the assertion that in the two folio volumes of the English Dictionary there is not a single passage quoted from any dramatist of the Elizabethan age, except Shakspeare and Ben. Even from Ben the quotations are few. Johnson might easily, in a few months, have made himself well acquainted with every old play that was extant. But it never seems to have occurred to him that this was a necessary preparation for the work which he had undertaken. He would doubtless have admitted that it would be the height of absurdity in a man who was not familiar with the works of Æschylus and Euripides to publish an edition of Sophocles. Yet he ventured to publish an edition of Shakspeare without having ever in his life, as far as can be discovered, read a single scene of Massinger, Ford, Decker, Webster, Marlowe, Beaumont, or Fletcher. His detractors were noisy and scurrilous. Those who most loved and honored him had little to say in praise of the manner in which he had discharged the duty of a commentator. He had, however, acquitted himself of a debt which had long lain heavy on his conscience, and he sunk back into the repose from which the sting of satire had roused him. He long continued to live upon the fame which he had already won. He was honored by the University of Oxford with a doctor's degree, by the Royal Academy with a professorship, and by the king with an interview, in which his majesty most graciously expressed a hope that so ex-

cellent a writer would not cease to write. In the interval, however, between 1765 and 1775 Johnson published only two or three political tracts, the longest of which he could have produced in forty-eight hours, if he had worked as he worked on the Life of Savage and on Rasselas.

But, though his pen was now idle, his tongue was active. The influence exercised by his conversation, directly upon those with whom he lived, and indirectly on the whole literary world, was altogether without a parallel. His colloquial talents were indeed of the highest order. He had strong sense, quick discernment, wit, humor, immense knowledge of literature and of life, and an infinite store of curious anecdotes. As respected style, he spoke far better than he wrote. Every sentence which dropped from his lips was as correct in structure as the most nicely balanced period of The Rambler. But in his talk there were no pompous triads, and little more than a fair proportion of words in *osity* and *ation*. All was simplicity, ease, and vigor. He uttered his short, weighty, and pointed sentences with a power of voice, and a justness and energy of emphasis, of which the effect was rather increased than diminished by the rollings of his huge form, and by the asthmatic gaspings and puffings in which the peals of his eloquence generally ended. Nor did the laziness which made him unwilling to sit down to his desk prevent him from giving instruction or entertainment orally. To discuss questions of taste, of learning, of casuistry, in language so exact and so forcible that it might have been printed with-

out the alteration of a word, was to him no exertion, but a pleasure. He loved, as he said, to fold his legs and have his talk out. He was ready to bestow the overflowings of his full mind on anybody who would start a subject, on a fellow-passenger in a stage-coach, or on the person who sat at the same table with him in an eating-house. But his conversation was nowhere so brilliant and striking as when he was surrounded by a few friends, whose abilities and knowledge enabled them, as he once expressed it, to send him back every ball that he threw. Some of these, in 1764, formed themselves into a club, which gradually became a formidable power in the commonwealth of letters. The verdicts pronounced by this conclave on new books were speedily known over all London, and were sufficient to sell off a whole edition in a day, or to condemn the sheets to the service of the trunk-maker and the pastry-cook. Nor shall we think this strange when we consider what great and various talents and acquirements met in the little fraternity. Goldsmith was the representative of poetry and light literature, Reynolds of the arts, Burke of political eloquence and political philosophy. There, too, were Gibbon, the greatest historian, and Jones, the greatest linguist, of the age. Garrick brought to the meeting his inexhaustible pleasantry, his incomparable mimicry, and his consummate knowledge of stage effect. Among the most constant attendants were two high-born and high-bred gentlemen, closely bound together by friendship, but of widely different characters and habits; Bennet Langton, distinguished by his skill

in Greek literature, by the orthodoxy of his opinions, and by the sanctity of his life; and Topham Beauclerk, renowned for his amours, his knowledge of the gay world, his fastidious taste, and his sarcastic wit. To predominate over such a society was not easy. Yet even over such a society Johnson predominated. Burke might indeed have disputed the supremacy to which others were under the necessity of submitting. But Burke, though not generally a very patient listener, was content to take the second part when Johnson was present; and the club itself, consisting of so many eminent men, is to this day popularly designated as Johnson's Club.

Among the members of this celebrated body was one to whom it has owed the greater part of its celebrity, yet who was regarded with little respect by his brethren, and had not without difficulty obtained a seat among them. This was James Boswell, a young Scotch lawyer, heir to an honorable name and a fair estate. That he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with him. That he could not reason, that he had no wit, no humor, no eloquence, is apparent from his writings. And yet his writings are read beyond the Mississippi, and under the Southern Cross, and are likely to be read as long as the English exists, either as a living or as a dead language. Nature had made him a slave and an idolater. His mind resembled those creepers which the botanists call parasites, and which can subsist only by clinging round the stems and imbibing the juices of stronger plants. He must

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

Reynolds, who was the first president of the Royal Academy, painted portraits of Johnson, Garrick, Boswell, and other members of the Literary Club.

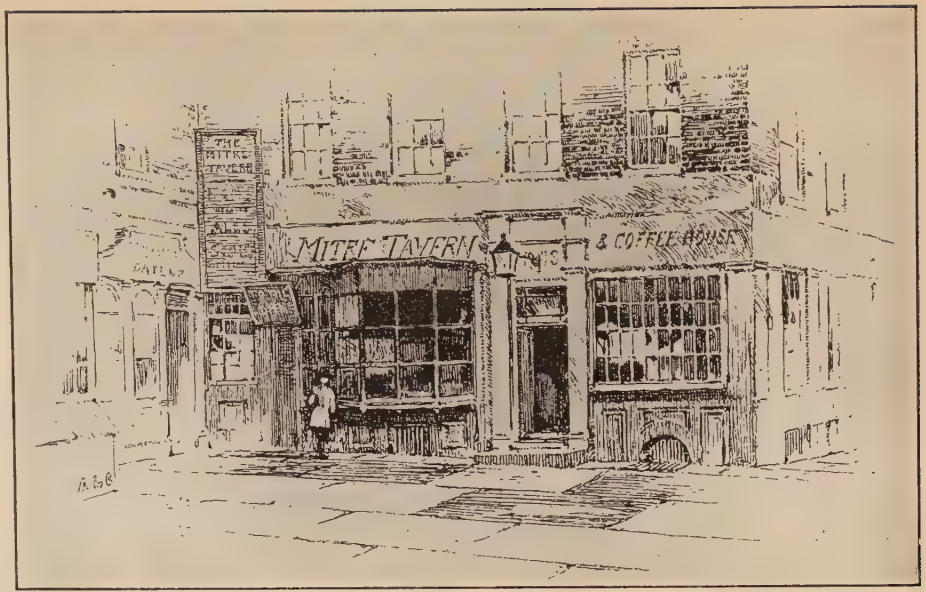
have fastened himself on somebody. He might have fastened himself on Wilkes, and have become the fiercest patriot in the Bill of Rights Society. He might have fastened himself on Whitefield, and have become the loudest field-preacher among the Calvinistic Methodists. In a happy hour he fastened himself on Johnson. The pair might seem ill-matched; for Johnson had early been prejudiced against Boswell's country. To a man of Johnson's strong understanding and irritable temper, the silly egotism and adulation of Boswell must have been as teasing as the constant buzz of a fly. Johnson hated to be questioned; and Boswell was eternally catechising him on all kinds of subjects, and sometimes propounded such questions as, "What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby?" Johnson was a water-drinker, and Boswell was a wine-bibber, and indeed little better than an habitual sot. It was impossible that there should be perfect harmony between two such companions. Indeed, the great man was sometimes provoked into fits of passion, in which he said things that the small man, during a few hours, seriously resented. Every quarrel, however, was soon made up. During twenty years the disciple continued to worship the master: the master continued to scold the disciple, to sneer at him, and to love him. The two friends ordinarily resided at a great distance from each other. Boswell practised in the Parliament House of Edinburgh, and could pay only occasional visits to London. During those visits his chief business was to watch Johnson, to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the

conversation to subjects about which Johnson was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto note-books with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the materials out of which was afterward constructed the most interesting biographical work in the world.

Soon after the club began to exist, Johnson formed a connection less important indeed to his fame, but much more important to his happiness, than his connection with Boswell. Henry Thrale, one of the most opulent brewers in the kingdom, a man of sound and cultivated understanding, rigid principles, and liberal spirit, was married to one of those clever, kind-hearted, engaging, vain, pert, young women, who are perpetually doing or saying what is not exactly right, but who, do or say what they may, are always agreeable. In 1765 the Thrales became acquainted with Johnson, and the acquaintance ripened fast into friendship. They were astonished and delighted by the brilliancy of his conversation. They were flattered by finding that a man so widely celebrated preferred their house to any other in London. Even the peculiarities which seemed to unfit him for civilized society, his gesticulations, his rollings, his puffings, his mutterings, the strange way in which he put on his clothes, the ravenous eagerness with which he devoured his dinner, his fits of melancholy, his fits of anger, his frequent rudeness, his occasional ferocity, increased the interest which his new associates took in him. For these things were the cruel marks left behind by a life which had been one long conflict with disease and with adver-

sity. In a vulgar hack writer such oddities would have excited only disgust. But in a man of genius, learning, and virtue, their effect was to add pity to admiration and esteem. Johnson soon had an apartment at the brewery in Southwark, and a still more pleasant apartment at the villa of his friends on Streatham Common. A large part of every year he passed in those abodes, abodes which must have seemed magnificent and luxurious indeed, when compared with the dens in which he had generally been lodged. But his chief pleasures were derived from what the astronomer of his Abyssinian tale called "the endearing elegance of female friendship." Mrs. Thrale rallied him, soothed him, coaxed him, and, if she sometimes provoked him by her flippancy, made ample amends by listening to his reproofs with angelic sweetness of temper. When he was diseased in body and in mind, she was the most tender of nurses. No comfort that wealth could purchase, no contrivance that womanly ingenuity, set to work by womanly compassion, could devise, was wanting to his sick-room. He requited her kindness by an affection pure as the affection of a father, yet delicately tinged with a gallantry which, though awkward, must have been more flattering than the attentions of a crowd of the fools who gloried in the names, now obsolete, of Buck and Maccaroni. It should seem that a full half of Johnson's life, during about sixteen years, was passed under the roof of the Thrales. He accompanied the family sometimes to Bath, and sometimes to Brighton; once to Wales, and once to Paris. But he had at the same time a house

in one of the narrow and gloomy courts on the north of Fleet Street. In the garrets was his library, a large and miscellaneous collection of books, falling to pieces and begrimed with dust. On a lower floor he sometimes, but very rarely, regaled a friend with a plain dinner, a veal pie, or a leg of lamb and spinach, and a rice pudding. Nor was the dwelling uninhabited during his long absences. It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that ever was brought together. At the head of the establishment Johnson had placed an old lady named Williams, whose chief recommendations were her blindness and her poverty. But, in spite of her murmurs and reproaches, he gave an asylum to another lady who was as poor as herself, Mrs. Desmoulins, whose family he had known many years before in Staffordshire. Room was found for the daughter of Mrs. Desmoulins, and for another destitute damsel, who was generally addressed as Miss Carmichael, but whom her generous host called Polly. An old quack doctor named Levett, who bled and dosed coal-heavers and hackney coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper, completed this strange menagerie. All these poor creatures were at constant war with each other, and with Johnson's negro servant Frank. Sometimes, indeed, they transferred their hostilities from the servant to the master, complained that a better table was not kept for them, and railed or maundered till their benefactor was glad to make his escape to Streatham, or to the Mitre tavern. And yet he, who was



MITRE TAVERN

The Tavern where Johnson, Goldsmith, and Boswell were accustomed to meet stood on Fleet Street.

generally the haughtiest and most irritable of mankind, who was but too prompt to resent anything which looked like a slight on the part of a purse-proud bookseller, or of a noble and powerful patron, bore patiently from mendicants, who, but for his bounty, must have gone to the workhouse, insults more provoking than those for which he had knocked down Osborne and bidden defiance to Chesterfield. Year after year Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins, Polly and Levett, continued to torment him and to live upon him.

The course of life which has been described was interrupted in Johnson's sixty-fourth year by an important event. He had early read an account of the Hebrides, and had been much interested by learning that there was so near him a land peopled by a race which was still as rude and simple as in the middle ages. A wish to become intimately acquainted with a state of society so utterly unlike all that he had ever seen frequently crossed his mind. But it is not probable that his curiosity would have overcome his habitual sluggishness, and his love of the smoke, the mud, and the cries of London, had not Boswell importuned him to attempt the adventure, and offered to be his squire. At length, in August 1773, Johnson crossed the Highland line, and plunged courageously into what was then considered, by most Englishmen, as a dreary and perilous wilderness. After wandering about two months through the Celtic region, sometimes in rude boats which did not protect him from the rain, and sometimes on small shaggy ponies which could hardly bear his weight, he returned to his old haunts with a

mind full of new images and new theories. During the following year he employed himself in recording his adventures. About the beginning of 1775, his Journey to the Hebrides was published, and was, during some weeks, the chief subject of conversation in all circles in which any attention was paid to literature. The book is still read with pleasure. The narrative is entertaining; the speculations, whether sound or unsound, are always ingenious; and the style, though too stiff and pompous, is somewhat easier and more graceful than that of his early writings. His prejudice against the Scotch had at length become little more than matter of jest; and whatever remained of the old feeling had been effectually removed by the kind and respectful hospitality with which he had been received in every part of Scotland. It was, of course, not to be expected that an Oxonian Tory should praise the Presbyterian polity and ritual, or that an eye accustomed to the hedge-rows and parks of England should not be struck by the bareness of Berwickshire and East Lothian. But even in censure Johnson's tone is not unfriendly. The most enlightened Scotchmen, with Lord Mansfield at their head, were well pleased. But some foolish and ignorant Scotchmen were moved to anger by a little unpalatable truth which was mingled with much eulogy, and assailed him whom they chose to consider as the enemy of their country with libels much more dishonorable to their country than anything that he had ever said or written. They published paragraphs in the newspapers, articles in the magazines, sixpenny pamphlets,

five-shilling books. One scribbler abused Johnson for being blear-eyed; another for being a pensioner; a third informed the world that one of the Doctor's uncles had been convicted of felony in Scotland, and had found that there was in that country one tree capable of supporting the weight of an Englishman. Macpherson, whose Fingal had been proved in the Journey to be an impudent forgery, threatened to take vengeance with a cane. The only effect of this threat was that Johnson reiterated the charge of forgery in the most contemptuous terms, and walked about, during some time, with a cudgel, which, if the impostor had not been too wise to encounter it, would assuredly have descended upon him, to borrow the sublime language of his own epic poem, "like a hammer on the red son of the furnace."

Of other assailants Johnson took no notice whatever. He had early resolved never to be drawn into controversy; and he adhered to his resolution with a steadfastness which is the more extraordinary because he was, both intellectually and morally, of the stuff of which controversialists are made. In conversation he was a singularly eager, acute, and pertinacious disputant. When at a loss for good reasons, he had recourse to sophistry; and when heated by altercation, he made unsparing use of sarcasm and invective. But when he took his pen in his hand, his whole character seemed to be changed. A hundred bad writers misrepresented him and reviled him; but not one of the hundred could boast of having been thought by him worthy of a refutation, or even of a retort. The Ken-

ricks, Campbells, MacNicols, and Hendersons did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter:

"Maxime, si tu vis, cupio contendere tecum."

But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a shuttlecock, which could be kept up only by being beaten back, as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apothegm of Bentley, that no man was ever written down but by himself.

Unhappily, a few months after the appearance of the Journey to the Hebrides, Johnson did what none of his envious assailants could have done, and, to a certain extent, succeeded in writing himself down. The disputes between England and her American colonies had reached a point at which no amicable adjustment was possible. Civil war was evidently impending;

and the ministers seem to have thought that the eloquence of Johnson might, with advantage, be employed to inflame the nation against the opposition here, and against the rebels beyond the Atlantic. He had already written two or three tracts in defense of the foreign and domestic policy of the Government; and those tracts, though hardly worthy of him, were much superior to the crowd of pamphlets which lay on the counters of Almon and Stockdale. But his Taxation No Tyranny was a pitiable failure. The very title was a silly phrase which can have been recommended to his choice by nothing but a jingling alliteration which he ought to have despised. The arguments were such as boys use in debating societies. The pleasantry was as awkward as the gambols of a hippopotamus. Even Boswell was forced to own that in this unfortunate piece he could detect no trace of his master's powers. The general opinion was that the strong faculties which had produced the Dictionary and The Rambler were beginning to feel the effect of time and of disease, and that the old man would best consult his credit by writing no more.

But this was a great mistake. Johnson had failed, not because his mind was less vigorous than when he wrote Rasselas in the evenings of a week, but because he had foolishly chosen, or suffered others to choose for him, a subject such as he would at no time have been competent to treat. He was in no sense a statesman. He never willingly read or thought or talked about affairs of State. He loved biography, literary history, the history of manners; but political history

was positively distasteful to him. The question at issue between the colonies and the mother-country was a question about which he had really nothing to say. He failed, therefore, as the greatest men must fail when they attempt to do that for which they are unfit; as Burke would have failed if Burke had tried to write comedies like those of Sheridan; as Reynolds would have failed if Reynolds had tried to paint landscapes like those of Wilson. Happily, Johnson soon had an opportunity of proving most signally that his failure was not to be ascribed to intellectual decay.

On Easter-eve 1777, some persons, deputed by a meeting which consisted of forty of the first booksellers in London, called upon him. Though he had some scruples about doing business at that season, he received his visitors with much civility. They came to inform him that a new edition of the English poets, from Cowley downward, was in contemplation, and to ask him to furnish short biographical prefaces. He readily undertook the task, a task for which he was preëminently qualified. His knowledge of the literary history of England since the Restoration was unrivalled. That knowledge he had derived partly from books and partly from sources which had long been closed; from old Grub Street traditions; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults; from the recollections of such men as Gilbert Walmesley, who had conversed with the wits of Button's; Cibber, who had mutilated the plays of two generations of dramatists; Orrery, who had been admitted to the society of Swift; and Savage,

who had rendered services of no very honorable kind to Pope. The biographer, therefore, sat down to his task with a mind full of matter. He had at first intended to give only a paragraph to every minor poet, and only four or five pages to the greatest name. But the flood of anecdote and criticism overflowed the narrow channel. The work, which was originally meant to consist only of a few sheets, swelled into ten volumes, small volumes, it is true, and not closely printed. The first four appeared in 1779, the remaining six in 1781.

The Lives of the Poets are, on the whole, the best of Johnson's works. The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and on human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are often excellent, and, even when grossly and provokingly unjust, well deserve to be studied; for, however erroneous they may be, they are never silly. They are the judgments of a mind trammelled by prejudice and deficient in sensibility, but vigorous and acute. They therefore generally contain a portion of valuable truth which deserves to be separated from the alloy; and, at the very worst, they mean something, a praise to which much of what is called criticism in our time has no pretensions.

Savage's Life Johnson reprinted nearly as it had appeared in 1744. Whoever, after reading that life, will turn to the other lives, will be struck by the difference of style. Since Johnson had been at ease in his circumstances, he had written little and had talked much. When, therefore, he, after the lapse

of years, resumed his pen, the mannerism which he had contracted while he was in the constant habit of elaborate composition was less perceptible than formerly; and his diction frequently had a colloquial ease which it had formerly wanted. The improvement may be discerned by a skilful critic in the Journey to the Hebrides, and in the Lives of the Poets is so obvious that it cannot escape the notice of the most careless reader.

Among the Lives the best are perhaps those of Cowley, Dryden, and Pope. The very worst is, beyond all doubt, that of Gray.

This great work at once became popular. There was, indeed, much just and much unjust censure; but even those who were loudest in blame were attracted by the book in spite of themselves. Malone computed the gains of the publishers at five or six thousand pounds. But the writer was very poorly remunerated. Intending at first to write very short prefaces, he had stipulated for only two hundred guineas. The booksellers, when they saw how far his performance had surpassed his promise, added only another hundred. Indeed, Johnson, though he did not despise, or affect to despise, money, and though his strong sense and long experience ought to have qualified him to protect his own interests, seems to have been singularly unskilful and unlucky in his literary bargains. He was generally reputed the first English writer of his time. Yet several writers of his time sold their copyrights for sums such as he never ventured to ask. To give a single instance, Robertson received four thousand

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL

five hundred pounds for the History of Charles the Fifth; and it is no disrespect to the memory of Robertson to say that the History of Charles the Fifth is both a less valuable and a less amusing book than the Lives of the Poets.

Johnson was now in his seventy-second year. The infirmities of age were coming fast upon him. That inevitable event, of which he never thought without horror, was brought near to him, and his whole life was darkened by the shadow of death. He had often to pay the cruel price of longevity. Every year he lost what could never be replaced. The strange dependents to whom he had given shelter, and to whom, in spite of their faults, he was strongly attached by habit, dropped off one by one; and, in the silence of his home, he regretted even the noise of their scolding-matches. The kind and generous Thrale was no more; and it would have been well if his wife had been laid beside him. But she survived to be the laughing-stock of those who had envied her, and to draw from the eyes of the old man who had loved her beyond anything in the world tears far more bitter than he would have shed over her grave. With some estimable and many agreeable qualities, she was not made to be independent. The control of a mind more steadfast than her own was necessary to her respectability. While she was restrained by her husband, a man of sense and firmness, indulgent to her taste in trifles, but always the undisputed master of his house, her worst offences had been impertinent jokes, white lies, and short fits of pettishness ending in sunny

good-humor. But he was gone; and she was left an opulent widow of forty, with strong sensibility, volatile fancy, and slender judgment. She soon fell in love with a music-master from Brescia, in whom nobody but herself could discover anything to admire. Her pride, and perhaps some better feelings, struggled hard against this degrading passion. But the struggle irritated her nerves, soured her temper, and at length endangered her health. Conscious that her choice was one which Johnson could not approve, she became desirous to escape from his inspection. Her manner toward him changed. She was sometimes cold and sometimes petulant. She did not conceal her joy when he left Streatham: she never pressed him to return; and if he came unbidden, she received him in a manner which convinced him that he was no longer a welcome guest. He took the very intelligible hints which she gave. He read, for the last time, a chapter of the Greek Testament in the library which had been formed by himself. In a solemn and tender prayer he commended the house and its inmates to the Divine protection, and, with emotions which choked his voice and convulsed his powerful frame, left forever that beloved home for the gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street, where the few and evil days which still remained to him were to run out. Here, in June, 1783, he had a paralytic stroke, from which, however, he recovered, and which does not appear to have at all impaired his intellectual faculties. But other maladies came thick upon him. His asthma tormented him day and night. Dropsical symptoms

made their appearance. While sinking under a complication of diseases, he heard that the woman whose friendship had been the chief happiness of sixteen years of his life had married an Italian fiddler; that all London was crying shame upon her; and that the newspapers and magazines were filled with allusions to the Ephesian matron and the two pictures in Hamlet. He vehemently said that he would try to forget her existence. He never uttered her name. Every memorial of her which met his eye he flung into the fire. She meanwhile fled from the laughter and hisses of her countrymen and countrywomen to a land where she was unknown, hastened across Mont Cenis, and learned, while passing a merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade parties at Milan, that the great man with whose name hers is inseparably associated had ceased to exist.

He had, in spite of much mental and much bodily affliction, clung vehemently to life. The feeling described in that fine but gloomy paper which closes the series of his Idlers seemed to grow stronger in him as his last hour drew near. He fancied that he should be able to draw his breath more easily in a Southern climate, and would probably have set out for Rome and Naples but for his fear of the expense of the journey. That expense, indeed, he had the means of defraying; for he had laid up about two thousand pounds, the fruit of labors which had made the fortune of several publishers. But he was unwilling to break in upon this hoard, and he seems to have wished even to keep its existence a secret. Some of his friends hoped that the Government might be induced to increase his

pension to six hundred pounds a year, but this hope was disappointed, and he resolved to stand one English winter more. This winter was his last. His legs grew weaker; his breath grew shorter; the fatal water gathered fast, in spite of incisions which he, courageous against pain, but timid against death, urged his surgeons to make deeper and deeper. Though the tender care which had mitigated his sufferings during months of sickness at Streatham was withdrawn, he was not left desolate. The ablest physicians and surgeons attended him, and refused to accept fees from him. Burke parted from him with deep emotion. Windham sat much in the sick-room, arranged the pillows, and sent his own servant to watch at night by the bed. Frances Burney, whom the old man had cherished with fatherly kindness, stood weeping at the door; while Langton, whose piety eminently qualified him to be an adviser and comforter at such a time, received the last pressure of his friend's hand within. When at length the moment, dreaded through so many years, came close, the dark cloud passed away from Johnson's mind. His temper became unusually patient and gentle; he ceased to think with terror of death, and of that which lies beyond death; and he spoke much of the mercy of God, and of the propitiation of Christ. In this serene frame of mind he died on the 13th of December, 1784. He was laid, a week later, in Westminster Abbey, among the eminent men of whom he had been the historian, — Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gay, Prior, and Addison.

Since his death the popularity of his works — the Lives of the Poets, and, perhaps, the Vanity of Human Wishes, excepted — has greatly diminished. His Dictionary has been altered by editors till it can scarcely be called his. An allusion to his Rambler or his Idler is not readily apprehended in literary circles. The fame even of Rasselas has grown somewhat dim. But though the celebrity of the writings may have declined, the celebrity of the writer, strange to say, is as great as ever. Boswell's book has done for him more than the best of his own books could do. The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works. But the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive. The old philosopher is still among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans. No human being who has been more than seventy years in the grave is so well known to us. And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the anfractuosities of his intellect and of his temper, serves only to strengthen our conviction that he was both a great and a good man.

[*Title-page to the* Third Edition.]

THE

LIFE

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

COMPREHENDING

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS STUDIES
AND NUMEROUS WORKS,
IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER;

A SERIES OF HIS EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE
AND CONVERSATIONS WITH MANY EMINENT PERSONS;

AND

VARIOUS ORIGINAL PIECES OF HIS COMPOSITION,
NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED:

THE WHOLE EXHIBITING A VIEW OF LITERATURE AND
LITERARY MEN IN GREAT-BRITAIN, FOR NEAR
HALF A CENTURY, DURING WHICH
HE FLOURISHED.

By JAMES BOSWELL, Esq.

——— *Quo fit ut* OMNIS
Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
VITA SENIS.———
HORAT.

THE THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND AUGMENTED,
IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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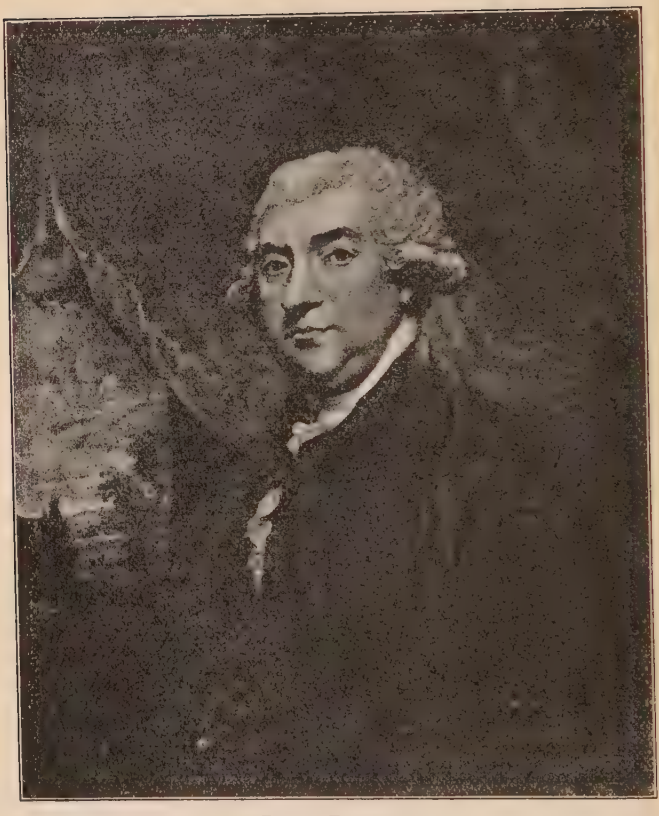


JAMES BOSWELL
After a painting by Reynolds.

SELECTIONS FROM BOSWELL'S LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

Boswell's Introduction

To write the Life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equalled by few in any age, is an arduous, and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task.

Had Dr. Johnson written his own life, in conformity with the opinion which he has given, that every man's life may be best written by himself; had he employed in the preservation of his own history, that clearness of narration and elegance of language in which he has embalmed so many eminent persons, the world would probably have had the most perfect example of biography that was ever exhibited. But although he at different times, in a desultory manner, committed to writing many particulars of the progress of his mind and fortunes, he never had persevering diligence enough to form them into a regular composition. Of these memorials a few have been preserved; but the greater part was consigned by him to the flames, a few days before his death.

As I had the honour and happiness of enjoying his friendship for upwards of twenty years; as I had the

scheme of writing his life constantly in view; as he was well apprised of this circumstance, and from time to time obligingly satisfied my inquiries, by communicating to me the incidents of his early years; as I acquired a facility in recollecting, and was very assiduous in recording, his conversation, of which the extraordinary vigour and vivacity constituted one of the first features of his character; and as I have spared no pains in obtaining materials concerning him, from every quarter where I could discover that they were to be found, and have been favoured with the most liberal communications by his friends; I flatter myself that few biographers have entered upon such a work as this, with more advantages; independent of literary abilities, in which I am not vain enough to compare myself with some great names who have gone before me in this kind of writing.

Boswell's Mode of Writing

Instead of melting down my materials into one mass, and constantly speaking in my own person, by which I might have appeared to have more merit in the execution of the work, I have resolved to adopt and enlarge upon the excellent plan of Mr. Mason, in his Memoirs of Gray. Wherever narrative is necessary to explain, connect, and supply, I furnish it to the best of my abilities; but in the chronological series of Johnson's life, which I trace as distinctly as I can, year by year, I produce, wherever it is in my power, his own minutes, letters or conversation, being convinced that this mode

is more lively, and will make my readers better acquainted with him, than even most of those were who actually knew him, but could know him only partially; whereas there is here an accumulation of intelligence from various points, by which his character is more fully understood and illustrated.

Indeed I cannot conceive a more perfect mode of writing any man's life, than not only relating all the most important events of it in their order, but interweaving what he privately wrote, and said, and thought; by which mankind are enabled as it were to see him live, and to 'live o'er each scene' with him, as he actually advanced through the several stages of his life. Had his other friends been as diligent and ardent as I was, he might have been almost entirely preserved. As it is, I will venture to say that he will be seen in this work more completely than any man who has ever yet lived.

And he will be seen as he really was; for I profess to write, not his panegyrick, which must be all praise, but his Life; which, great and good as he was, must not be supposed to be entirely perfect. To be as he was, is indeed subject of panegyrick enough to any man in this state of being; but in every picture there should be shade as well as light, and when I delineate him without reserve, I do what he himself recommended, both by his precept and his example.

Samuel Johnson's Father

Mr. Michael Johnson was a man of a large and robust body, and of a strong and active mind; yet, as in the

most solid rocks veins of unsound substances are often discovered, there was in him a mixture of that disease, the nature of which eludes the most minute enquiry, though the effects are well known to be a weariness of life, an unconcern about those things which agitate the greater part of mankind, and a general sensation of gloomy wretchedness. From him then his son inherited, with some other qualities, 'a vile melancholy,' which in his too strong expression of any disturbance of the mind, 'made him mad all his life, at least not sober.' Michael was, however, forced by the narrowness of his circumstances to be very diligent in business, not only in his shop, by occasionally resorting to several towns in the neighbourhood, some of which were at a considerable distance from Lichfield. At that time booksellers' shops in the provincial towns of England were very rare, so that there was not one even in Birmingham, in which town old Mr. Johnson used to open a shop every market-day. He was a pretty good Latin scholar, and a citizen so creditable as to be made one of the magistrates of Lichfield; and, being a man of good sense, and skill in his trade, he acquired a reasonable share of wealth, of which however he afterwards lost the greatest part, by engaging unsuccessfully in a manufacture of parchment. He was a zealous high-church man and royalist, and retained his attachment to the unfortunate house of Stuart, though he reconciled himself, by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the prevailing power.

LICHFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

It was founded by King Edward VI. Johnson became a pupil in 1719 at the age of ten. He remained at this school till he was fifteen.

Johnson's Memory

Of the power of his memory, for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible, the following early instance was told me in his presence at Lichfield, in 1776, by his step-daughter, Mrs. Lucy Porter, as related to her by his mother. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the common prayer-book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, 'Sam, you must get this by heart.' She went up stairs, leaving him to study it: But by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. 'What's the matter?' said she. 'I can say it,' he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.

At Lichfield School

He began to learn Latin with Mr. Hawkins, usher, or under-master of Lichfield school, 'a man (said he) very skilful in his little way.' With him he continued two years, and then rose to be under the care of Mr. Hunter, the head-master, who, according to his account, 'was very severe, and wrong-headedly severe. He used (said he) to beat us unmercifully; and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence; for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it. He would ask a boy a question; and if he did not answer it, he would beat him, without considering whether he had an opportunity of knowing how to answer it. For instance,

he would call up a boy and ask him Latin for a candlestick, which the boy could not expect to be asked. Now, Sir, if a boy could answer every question, there would be no need of a master to teach him.'

Reading in His Father's Book Store

The two years which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in what he thought idleness, and was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study, as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance of his casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book. What he read during these two years he told me, was not works of mere amusement, 'not voyages and travels, but all literature, Sir, all ancient writers, all manly: though but little Greek, only some of Anacreon and Hesiod; but in this irregular manner (added he) I had looked into a great many books, which were not commonly known at the Universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their

hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now master of Pembroke College, told me I was the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there.'

Johnson Marries Mrs. Porter

Though Mrs. Porter was double the age of Johnson, and her person and manner, as described to me by the late Mr. Garrick, were by no means pleasing to others, she must have had a superiority of understanding and talents, as she certainly inspired him with a more than ordinary passion; and she having signified her willingness to accept of his hand, he went to Lichfield to ask his mother's consent to the marriage, which he could not but be conscious was a very imprudent scheme, both on account of their disparity of years, and her want of fortune. But Mrs. Johnson knew too well the ardour of her son's temper, and was too tender a parent to oppose his inclinations.

I know not for what reason the marriage ceremony was not performed at Birmingham; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback, I suppose in very good humour. But though Mr. Topham Beauclerk used archly to mention Johnson's having told him, with much gravity, 'Sir, it was a love marriage on both sides,' I have had from my illustrious friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn:

9th July: — 'Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that

a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, Sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears.'

This, it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity; but there is no doubt that Johnson, though he thus shewed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life: and in his *Prayers and Meditations*, we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased, even after her death.

Johnson as a Teacher

He now set up a private academy, for which purpose he hired a large house, well situated near his native city. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1736, there is the following advertisement:

'At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by SAMUEL JOHNSON.'

But the only pupils that were put under his care were the celebrated David Garrick and his brother George, and a Mr. Offely, a young gentleman of good fortune

who died early. As yet, his name had nothing of that celebrity which afterwards commanded the highest attention and respect of mankind. Had such an advertisement appeared after the publication of his *London*, or his *Rambler*, or his *Dictionary*, how would it have burst upon the world! with what eagerness would the great and the wealthy have embraced an opportunity of putting their sons under the learned tuition of SAMUEL JOHNSON. The truth, however, is, that he was not so well qualified for being a teacher of elements, and a conductor in learning by regular gradations, as men of inferiour powers of mind. His own acquisitions had been made by fits and starts, by violent irruptions into the regions of knowledge; and it could not be expected that his impatience would be subdued, and his impetuosity restrained, so as to fit him for a quiet guide to novices. The art of communicating instruction, of whatever kind, is much to be valued; and I have ever thought that those who devote themselves to this employment, and do their duty with diligence and success, are entitled to very high respect from the community, as Johnson himself often maintained. Yet I am of opinion that the greatest abilities are not only not required for this office, but render a man less fit for it.

Johnson's Journey to London with Garrick

Both Johnson and Garrick used to talk pleasantly of this their first journey to London. Garrick, evi-

dently meaning to embellish a little, said one day in my hearing, "We rode and tied." And the Bishop of Killaloe informed me that at another time, when Johnson and Garrick were dining together in a pretty large company, Johnson humorously ascertaining the chronology of something, expressed himself thus: "that was the year when I came to London with two-pence half-penny in my pocket." Garrick overhearing him exclaimed, "eh? what do you say? with two-pence half-penny in your pocket?" JOHNSON. "Why yes; when I came with two-pence half-penny in my pocket, and thou, Davy, with three half-pence in thine."

Johnson and Savage

It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such extreme indigence, that they could not pay for a lodging; so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. Yet in these almost incredible scenes of distress, we may suppose that Savage mentioned many of the anecdotes with which Johnson afterwards enriched the life of his unhappy companion, and those of other Poets.

He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's-square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and 'resolved they would *stand by their country*.'

I am afraid, however, that by associating with

Savage, who was habituated to the dissipation and licentiousness of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that conduct, for which in days of greater simplicity, he was remarked by his friend Mr. Hector; but was imperceptibly led into some indulgencies which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind.

The Failure of *Irene*

Dr. Adams was present the first night of the representation of *Irene*, and gave me the following account: 'Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself in a manly strain, soothed the audience, and the play went off tolerably, till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bow-string round her neck. The audience cried out "*Murder! Murder!*" She several times attempted to speak; but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive.' This passage was afterwards struck out, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it. The Epilogue, as Johnson informed me, was written by Sir William Yonge. I know not how his play came to be thus graced by the pen of a person then so eminent in the political world.

Notwithstanding all the support of such performers as Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, and every advantage of dress and decoration, the tragedy of *Irene* did not please the publick. Mr. Garrick's

zeal carried it through for nine nights, so that the authour had his three nights' profits; and from a receipt signed by him, now in the hands of Mr. James Dodsley, it appears that his friend Mr. Robert Dodsley gave him one hundred pounds for the copy, with his usual reservation of the right of one edition.

* * * *

When asked how he felt upon the ill success of his tragedy, he replied, 'Like the Monument'; meaning that he continued firm and unmoved as that column. And let it be remembered, as an admonition to the *genus irritabile* of dramatick writers, that this great man, instead of peevishly complaining of the bad taste of the town, submitted to its decision without a murmur. He had, indeed, upon all occasions, a great deference for the general opinion: 'A man (said he) who writes a book, thinks himself wiser or wittier than the rest of mankind; he supposes that he can instruct or amuse them, and the publick to whom he appeals, must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions.'

On occasion of his play being brought upon the stage, Johnson had a fancy that as a dramatick authour his dress should be more gay than what he ordinarily wore; he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He humourously observed to Mr. Langton, 'that when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes.' Dress indeed, we must allow, has more effect even upon strong minds than one should suppose, without having had the

experience of it. His necessary attendance while his play was in rehearsal, and during its performance, brought him acquainted with many of the performers of both sexes, which produced a more favourable opinion of their profession than he had harshly expressed in his *Life of Savage*. With some of them he kept up an acquaintance as long as he and they lived, and was ever ready to shew them acts of kindness. He for a considerable time used to frequent the *Green Room*, and seemed to take delight in dissipating his gloom, by mixing in the sprightly chit-chat of the motley circle then to be found there.

An Early Morning "Frisk"

One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour agreed to their proposal: 'What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you.' He was soon drest, and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden, where the greengrocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but

the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked; while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

> 'Short, O short then be thy reign,
> And give us to the world again!'

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day: but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young Ladies. Johnson scolded him for 'leaving his social friends, to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls.' Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, 'I heard of your frolick t'other night. You'll be in the Chronicle.' Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, '*He* durst not do such a thing. His *wife* would not *let* him!'

Johnson Denounces Bolingbroke

On the 6th of March (1754) came out Lord Bolingbroke's works, published by Mr. David Mallet. The wild and pernicious ravings under the name of "Philosophy," which were thus ushered into the world, gave great offence to all well-principled men. Johnson, hearing of their tendency, which nobody disputed, was

roused with a just indignation, and pronounced this memorable sentence upon the noble authour and his editor: — "Sir, he was a scoundrel, and a coward: a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half-a-crown to a beggarly Scotchman to draw the trigger after his death!"

Boswell Is Introduced to Johnson

[1763: ÆTAT. 54]. — THIS is to me a memorable year; for in it I had the happiness to obtain the acquaintance of that extraordinary man whose memoirs I am now writing; an acquaintance which I shall ever esteem as one of the most fortunate circumstances in my life. Though then but two-and-twenty, I had for several years read his works with delight and instruction, and had the highest reverence for their authour, which had grown up in my fancy into a kind of mysterious veneration, by figuring to myself a state of solemn elevated abstraction, in which I supposed him to live in the immense metropolis of London. Mr. Gentleman, a native of Ireland, who passed some years in Scotland as a player, and as an instructor in the English language, a man whose talents and worth were depressed by misfortunes, had given me a representation of the figure and manner of DICTIONARY JOHNSON! as he was then generally called; and during my first visit to London, which was for three months in 1760, Mr. Derrick the poet, who was Gentleman's friend and countryman, flattered me with hopes that he would introduce me

to Johnson, an honour of which I was very ambitious. But he never found an opportunity; which made me doubt that he had promised to do what was not in his power; till Johnson some years afterwards told me, 'Derrick, Sir, might very well have introduced you. I had a kindness for Derrick, and am sorry he is dead.'

Mr. Thomas Davies the actor, who then kept a bookseller's shop in Russel-street, Covent-garden, told me that Johnson was very much his friend, and came frequently to his house, where he more than once invited me to meet him; but by some unlucky accident or other he was prevented from coming to us.

Mr. Thomas Davies was a man of good understanding and talents, with the advantage of a liberal education. Though somewhat pompous, he was an entertaining companion; and his literary performances have no inconsiderable share of merit. He was a friendly and very hospitable man. Both he and his wife, (who has been celebrated for her beauty,) though upon the stage for many years, maintained an uniform decency of character; and Johnson esteemed them, and lived in as easy an intimacy with them, as with any family which he used to visit. Mr. Davies recollected several of Johnson's remarkable sayings, and was one of the best of the many imitators of his voice and manner, while relating them. He increased my impatience more and more to see the extraordinary man whose works I highly valued, and whose conversation was reported to be so peculiarly excellent.

At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk

tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop; and Mr. Davies having perceived him through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us, — he announced his aweful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of the father's ghost, 'Look, my Lord, it comes.' I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his *Dictionary*, in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation, which was the first picture his friend did for him, which Sir Joshua very kindly presented to me, and from which an engraving has been made for this work. Mr. Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, 'Don't tell where I come from.' — 'From Scotland,' cried Davies roguishly. 'Mr. Johnson, (said I) I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it.' I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as light pleasantry to sooth and conciliate him, and not as an humiliating abasement at the expence of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for with that quickness of wit for which he was so remarkable, he seized the expression 'come from Scotland,' which I used in the sense of being of that country; and, as if I had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, 'That, Sir, I find, is what a very great many of your country-

men cannot help.' This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we had sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might come next. He then addressed himself to Davies: 'What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings.' Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, I ventured to say, 'O, Sir, I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you.' 'Sir, (said he, with a stern look,) I have known David Garrick longer than you have done: and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject.' Perhaps I deserved this check; for it was rather presumptuous in me, an entire stranger, to express any doubt of the justice of his animadversion upon his old acquaintance and pupil. I now felt myself much mortified, and began to think that the hope which I had long indulged of obtaining his acquaintance was blasted. And, in truth, had not my ardour been uncommonly strong, and my resolution uncommonly persevering, so rough a reception might have deterred me for ever from making any further attempts. Fortunately, however, I remained upon the field not wholly discomfited; and was soon rewarded by hearing some of his conversation.

Knowledge

On Saturday, July 30 (1763), Dr. Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowl-

edge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education. JOHNSON. 'Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it.' 'And yet (said I) people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors.' He then called to the boy, 'What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?' 'Sir (said the boy), I would give what I have.' Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare. Dr. Johnson then turning to me, 'Sir (said he), a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being whose mind is not debauched will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge.'

Boswell's First Call upon Johnson

When I rose a second time he again pressed me to stay, which I did.

He told me, that he generally went abroad at four in the afternoon, and seldom came home till two in the morning. I took the liberty to ask if he did not think it wrong to live thus, and not make more use of his great talents. He owned it was a bad habit. On

reviewing, at the distance of many years, my journal of this period, I wonder how, at my first visit, I ventured to talk to him so freely, and that he bore it with so much indulgence.

Before we parted, he was so good as to promise to favour me with his company one evening at my lodgings; and, as I took my leave, shook me cordially by the hand. It is almost needless to add, that I felt no little elation at having now so happily established an acquaintance of which I had been so long ambitious.

My readers will, I trust, excuse me for being thus minutely circumstantial, when it is considered that the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson was to me a most valuable acquisition, and laid the foundation of whatever instruction and entertainment they may receive from my collections concerning the great subject of the work which they are now perusing.

Concerning Goldsmith and *The Vicar of Wakefield*

As Dr. Oliver Goldsmith will frequently appear in this narrative, I shall endeavour to make my readers in some degree acquainted with his singular character. He was a native of Ireland, and a contemporary with Mr. Burke at Trinity College, Dublin, but did not then give much promise of future celebrity. He, however, observed to Mr. Malone, that 'though he made no great figure in mathematicks, which was a study in much repute there, he could turn an Ode of Horace into English better than any of them.' He afterwards stud-

ied physick at Edinburgh, and upon the Continent; and I have been informed, was enabled to pursue his travels on foot, partly by demanding at Universities to enter the lists as a disputant, by which, according to the custom of many of them, he was entitled to the premium of a crown, when luckily for him his challenge was not accepted; so that, as I once observed to Dr. Johnson, he *disputed* his passage through Europe. He then came to England, and was employed successively in the capacities of an usher to an academy, a corrector of the press, and reviewer, and a writer for a news-paper. He had sagacity enough to cultivate assiduously the acquaintance of Johnson, and his faculties were gradually enlarged by the contemplation of such a model. To me and many others it appeared that he studiously copied the manner of Johnson, though, indeed, upon a smaller scale.

He, I am afraid, had no settled system of any sort, so that his conduct must not be strictly scrutinised; but his affections were social and generous, and when he had money he gave it away very liberally. His desire of imaginary consequence predominated over his attention to truth. When he began to rise into notice, he said he had a brother who was Dean of Durham, a fiction so easily detected, that it is wonderful how he should have been so inconsiderate as to hazard it. He boasted to me at this time of the power of his pen in commanding money, which I believe was true in a certain degree, though in the instance he gave he was by no means correct. He told me that he had sold a novel for four hundred pounds. This was his

Vicar of Wakefield. But Johnson informed me, that he had made the bargain for Goldsmith, and the price was sixty pounds. 'And, Sir, (said he,) a sufficient price, too, when it was sold; for then the fame of Goldsmith had not been elevated, as it afterwards was, by his *Traveller;* and the bookseller had such faint hopes of profit by his bargain, that he kept the manuscript by him a long time, and did not publish it till after *The Traveller* had appeared. Then, to be sure, it was accidentally worth more money.'

Mrs. Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins have strangely misstated the history of Goldsmith's situation and Johnson's friendly interference, when this novel was sold. I shall give it authentically from Johnson's own exact narration: — 'I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was drest, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return, and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged

DR. JOHNSON READING THE MANUSCRIPT OF GOLDSMITH'S "VICAR OF WAKEFIELD"
This was on the occasion of Goldsmith's arrest for debt to his landlady, who is shown in the picture.

his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill.'

Johnson's Love of Young People

[At the Turk's Head, July 21st, 1763] At night Mr. Johnson and I supped in a private room at the Turk's Head coffee-house, in the Strand. 'I encourage this house (said he;) for the mistress of it is a good civil woman, and has not much business.'

'Sir, I love the acquaintance of young people; because, in the first place, I don't like to think myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longest, if they do last; and then, Sir, young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect. I love the young dogs of this age: they have more wit and humour and knowledge of life than we had; but then the dogs are not so good scholars. Sir, in my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now. My judgement, to be sure, was not so good; but I had all the facts. I remember very well, when I was at Oxford, an old gentleman said to me, "Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task."'

He mentioned to me now, for the first time, that he had been distrest by melancholy, and for that reason had been obliged to fly from study and medita-

tion, to the dissipating variety of life. Against melancholy he recommended constant occupation of mind, a great deal of exercise, moderation in eating and drinking, and especially to shun drinking at night. He said melancholy people were apt to fly to intemperance for relief, but that it sunk them much deeper in misery. He observed, that labouring men who work hard, and live sparingly, are seldom or never troubled with low spirits.

Peculiarities of Manner and Speech

He had another particularity, of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. It appeared to me some superstitious habit, which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot, (I am not certain which,) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion. A strange instance of something of this nature, even

when on horseback, happened when he was in the Isle of Sky. Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed him to go a good way about, rather than cross a particular alley in Leicester-fields; but this Sir Joshua imputed to his having had some disagreeable recollection associated with it.

That the most minute singularities which belonged to him, and made very observable parts of his appearance and manner, may not be omitted, it is requisite to mention, that while talking or even musing as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head to one side towards his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backwards and forwards, and rubbing his left knee in the same direction, with the palm of his hand. In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, or what is called chewing the cud, sometimes giving a half whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing quickly under his breath, *too, too, too:* all this accompanied sometimes with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile. Generally when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a Whale. This I supposed was a relief to his lungs; and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind.

Johnson's Interview with King George III

In February, 1767, there happened one of the most remarkable incidents of Johnson's life, which gratified his monarchical enthusiasm, and which he loved to relate with all its circumstances, when requested by his friends. This was his being honoured by a private conversation with his Majesty, in the library at the Queen's house. He had frequently visited those splendid rooms and noble collection of books, which he used to say was more numerous and curious than he supposed any person could have made in the time which the King had employed. Mr. Barnard, the librarian, took care that he should have every accommodation that could contribute to his ease and convenience, while indulging his literary taste in that place; so that he had here a very agreeable resource at leisure hours.

His Majesty having been informed of his occasional visits, was pleased to signify a desire that he should be told when Dr. Johnson came next to the library. Accordingly, the next time that Johnson did come, as soon as he was fairly engaged with a book, on which, while he sat by the fire, he seemed quite intent, Mr. Barnard stole round to the apartment where the King was, and, in obedience to his Majesty's commands, mentioned that Dr. Johnson was then in the library. His Majesty said he was at leisure, and would go to him; upon which Mr. Barnard took one of the candles that stood on the King's table, and lighted his Majesty through a suite of rooms, till they came to a private door into the library, of which his Majesty had the key. Being

entered, Mr. Barnard stepped forward hastily to Dr. Johnson, who was still in a profound study, and whispered him, 'Sir, here is the King.' Johnson started up, and stood still. His Majesty approached him, and at once was courteously easy.

His Majesty began by observing, that he understood he came sometimes to the library; and then mentioning his having heard that the Doctor had been lately at Oxford, asked him if he was not fond of going thither. To which Johnson answered, that he was indeed fond of going to Oxford sometimes, but was likewise glad to come back again. The King then asked him what they were doing at Oxford. Johnson answered, he could not much commend their diligence, but that in some respects they were mended, for they had put their press under better regulations, and were at that time printing Polybius. He was then asked whether there were better libraries at Oxford or Cambridge. He answered, he believed the Bodleian was larger than any they had at Cambridge; at the same time adding, 'I hope, whether we have more books or not than they have at Cambridge, we shall make as good use of them as they do.' Being asked whether All-Souls or Christ-Church library was the largest, he answered, 'All-Souls library is the largest we have, except the Bodleian.' 'Aye, (said the King,) that is the publick library.'

His Majesty enquired if he was then writing any thing. He answered, he was not, for he had pretty well told the world what he knew, and must now read to acquire more knowledge. The King, as it should

seem with a view to urge him to rely on his own stores as an original writer, and to continue his labours, then said 'I do not think you borrow much from any body.' Johnson said, he thought he had already done his part as a writer. 'I should have thought so too, (said the King,) if you had not written so well.' — Johnson observed to me, upon this, that 'No man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a King to pay. It was decisive.' When asked by another friend, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, whether he made any reply to this high compliment, he answered, 'No, Sir. When the King had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my Sovereign.' Perhaps no man who had spent his whole life in courts could have shewn a more nice and dignified sense of true politeness, than Johnson did in this instance.

His Majesty having observed to him that he supposed he must have read a great deal; Johnson answered, that he thought more than he read; that he had read a great deal in the early part of his life, but having fallen into ill health, he had not been able to read much, compared with others: for instance, he said he had not read much, compared with Dr. Warburton. Upon which the King said, that he heard Dr. Warburton was a man of such general knowledge, that you could scarce talk with him on any subject on which he was not qualified to speak; and that his learning resembled Garrick's acting, in its universality. His Majesty then talked of the controversy between Warburton and Lowth, which he seemed to have read, and asked Johnson what he thought of it. Johnson answered,

'Warburton has most general, most scholastick learning; Lowth is the more correct scholar. I do not know which of them calls names best.' The King was pleased to say he was of the same opinion; adding, 'You do not think, then, Dr. Johnson, that there was much argument in the case.' Johnson said, he did not think there was. 'Why truly, (said the King,) when once it comes to calling names, argument is pretty well at an end.'

His Majesty then asked him what he thought of Lord Lyttleton's *History*, which was then just published. Johnson said, he thought his style was pretty good, but that he had blamed Henry the Second rather too much. 'Why, (said the King,) they seldom do these things by halves.' 'No, Sir, (answered Johnson,) not to Kings.' But fearing to be misunderstood, he proceeded to explain himself; and immediately subjoined, 'That for those who spoke worse of Kings than they deserved, he could find no excuse; but that he could more easily conceive how some might speak better of them than they deserved, without any ill intention; for, as Kings had much in their power to give, those who were favoured by them would frequently, from gratitude, exaggerate their praises; and as this proceeded from a good motive, it was certainly excusable, as far as errour could be excusable.'

The King then asked him what he thought of Dr. Hill. Johnson answered, that he was an ingenious man, but had no veracity; and immediately mentioned, as an instance of it, an assertion of that writer, that he had seen objects magnified to a much greater

degree by using three or four microscopes at a time, than by using one. 'Now, (added Johnson,) every one acquainted with microscopes knows, that the more of them he looks through, the less the object will appear.' 'Why (replied the King,) this is not only telling an untruth, but telling it clumsily; for, if that be the case, every one who can look through a microscope will be able to detect him.'

'I now, (said Johnson to his friends, when relating what had passed) began to consider that I was depreciating this man in the estimation of his Sovereign, and thought it was time for me to say something that might be more favourable.' He added, therefore, that Dr. Hill was, notwithstanding, a very curious observer; and if he would have been contented to tell the world no more than he knew, he might have been a very considerable man, and needed not to have recourse to such mean expedients to raise his reputation.

* * * *

His Majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr. Johnson to undertake it. Johnson signified his readiness to comply with his Majesty's wishes.

During the whole of this interview, Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee and in the drawing-room. After the King withdrew, Johnson shewed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation, and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr. Barnard, 'Sir, they may talk of the King

as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen.' And he afterwards observed to Mr. Langton, 'Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Lewis the Fourteenth or Charles the Second.'

Johnson's "Talking for Victory"

[1769, Oct. 26th] There was a pretty large circle this evening. Dr. Johnson was in very good humour, lively, and ready to talk upon all subjects. Mr. Fergusson, the self-taught philosopher, told him of a new-invented machine which went without horses: a man who sat in it turned a handle, which worked a spring that drove it forward. 'Then, Sir, (said Johnson,) what is gained is, the man has his choice whether he will move himself alone, or himself and the machine too.' Dominicetti being mentioned, he would not allow him any merit. 'There is nothing in all this boasted system. No, Sir; medicated baths can be no better than warm water: their only effect can be that of tepid moisture.' One of the company took the other side, maintaining that medicines of various sorts, and some too of most powerful effect, are introduced into the human frame by the medium of the pores; and, therefore, when warm water is impregnated with salutiferous substances, it may produce great effects as a bath. This appeared to me very satisfactory. Johnson did not answer it; but talking for victory, and determined to be master of the field, he had recourse to the device which Goldsmith imputed to him in the witty words of one of Cibber's

comedies: 'There is no arguing with Johnson; for when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it.' He turned to the gentleman, 'Well, Sir, go to Dominicetti, and get thyself fumigated; but be sure that the steam be directed to thy *head*, for *that* is the *peccant part*.' This produced a triumphant roar of laughter from the motley assembly of philosophers, printers, and dependents, male and female.

Scotchmen

Mr. Ogilvie was unlucky enough to choose for the topic of his conversation the praises of his native country. He began with saying that there was very rich land round Edinburgh. Goldsmith, who had studied physic there, contradicted this, very untruly, with a sneering laugh. Disconcerted a little by this, Mr. Ogilvie then took new ground where, I suppose, he thought himself perfectly safe, for he observed that Scotland had a great many noble wild prospects. JOHNSON. 'I believe, Sir, you have a great many. Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But Sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!'

Boswell Dines with Johnson

April 11, 1773, being Easter-Sunday, after having attended Divine Service at St. Paul's, I repaired to Dr. Johnson's. I had gratified my curiosity much in dining with JEAN JAQUES ROUSSEAU, while he lived in the

wilds of Neufchatel: I had as great a curiosity to dine with Dr. Samuel Johnson, in the dusky recess of a court in Fleet-street. I supposed we should scarcely have knives and forks, and only some strange, uncouth, ill-drest dish: but I found every thing in very good order. We had no other company but Mrs. Williams and a young woman whom I did not know. As a dinner here was considered as a singular phænomenon, and as I was frequently interrogated on the subject, my readers may perhaps be desirous to know our bill of fare. Foote, I remember, in allusion to Francis, the *negro*, was willing to suppose that our repast was *black broth*. But the fact was, that we had a very good soup, a boiled leg of lamb and spinach, a veal pye, and a rice pudding.

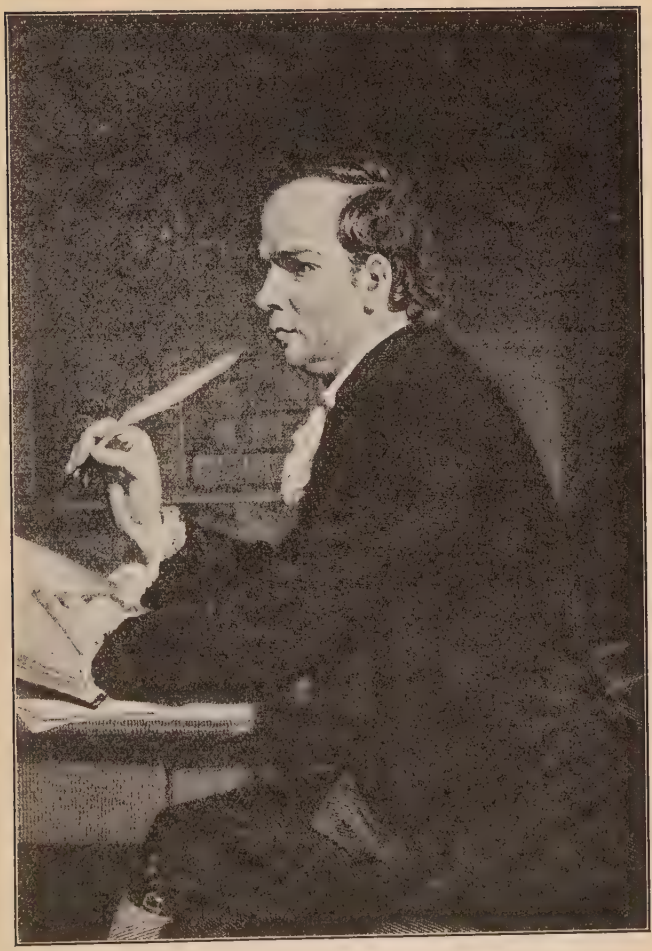
Johnson's Opinions of Goldsmith

Goldsmith, however, was often very fortunate in his witty contests, even when he entered the lists with Johnson himself. Sir Joshua Reynolds was in company with them one day, when Goldsmith said, that he thought he could write a good fable, mentioned the simplicity which that kind of composition requires, and observed, that in most fables the animals introduced seldom talk in character. 'For instance, (said he,) the fable of the little fishes, who saw birds fly over their heads, and envying them, petitioned Jupiter to be changed into birds. The skill (continued he,) consists in making them talk like little fishes.' While he indulged himself in this fanciful reverie, he observed Johnson shaking his sides, and laughing. Upon

which he smartly proceeded, 'Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES.'

On Friday, April 30, I dined with him at Mr. Beauclerk's, where were Lord Charlemont, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and some more members of the LITERARY CLUB, whom he had obligingly invited to meet me, as I was this evening to be balloted for as candidate for admission into that distinguished society. Johnson had done me the honour to propose me, and Beauclerk was very zealous for me.

Goldsmith being mentioned; JOHNSON. 'It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows. He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else.' SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. 'Yet there is no man whose company is more liked.' JOHNSON. 'To be sure, Sir. When people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer, their inferiour while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself is very true, — he always gets the better when he argues alone; meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it; but when he comes into company, grows confused, and unable to talk. Take him as a poet, his *Traveller* is a very fine performance; ay, and so is his *Deserted Village*, were it not sometimes too much the echo of his *Traveller*. Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, — as a comick writer, — or as an historian, he stands in the first class.' BOSWELL. 'An historian! My dear Sir, you surely will not rank his compilation of the Roman



OLIVER GOLDSMITH

History with the works of other historians of this age?' JOHNSON. 'Why, who are before him?' BOSWELL. 'Hume, — Robertson, — Lord Lyttelton.' JOHNSON (his antipathy to the Scotch beginning to rise). 'I have not read Hume; but, doubtless, Goldsmith's *History* is better than the *verbiage* of Robertson, or the foppery of Dalrymple.' BOSWELL. 'Will you not admit the superiority of Robertson, in whose *History* we find such penetration — such painting?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you must consider how that penetration and that painting are employed. It is not history, it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw, draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history-piece: he imagines an heroic countenance. You must look upon Robertson's work as romance, and try it by that standard. History it is not.'

Johnson's Opinion of Sea-Life

Dr. Johnson took occasion to enlarge, as he often did, upon the wretchedness of a sea-life. 'A ship is worse than a gaol. There is in a gaol better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger. When men come to like a sea-life they are not fit to live on land.' — 'Then (said I) it would be cruel in a father to breed his son to the sea.' JOHNSON. 'It would be cruel in a father who thinks as I do. Men go to sea before they know the unhappiness of that way of life; and when they have come to know it they cannot escape from it because it is then too late

to choose another profession; as indeed is generally the case with men when they have once engaged in any particular way of life.'

Boswell in Difficulties

Upon the much-expected Wednesday, I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, as upon a former occasion, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. 'How is this, Sir? (said I.) Don't you recollect that you are to dine at Mr. Dilly's?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams.' BOSWELL. 'But, my dear Sir, you know you were engaged to Mr. Dilly, and I told him so. He will expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come.' JOHNSON. 'You must talk to Mrs. Williams about this.'

Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured would yet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to shew Mrs. Williams such a degree of humane attention, as frequently imposed some restraint upon him; and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened down stairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr. Johnson had engaged to me to dine this day at Mr. Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. 'Yes, Sir, (said she, pretty peevishly,)

Dr. Johnson is to dine at home.' — 'Madam, (said I,) his respect for you is such, that I know he will not leave you unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company, I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day; as Mr. Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr. Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him to-day. And then, Madam, be pleased to consider my situation; I carried the message, and I assured Mr. Dilly that Dr. Johnson was to come, and no doubt he has made a dinner, and invited a company, and boasted of the honour he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there.' She gradually softened to my solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr. Johnson, 'That all things considered, she thought he should certainly go.' I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, 'indifferent in his choice to go or stay;' but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs. Williams' consent, he roared, 'Frank, a clean shirt,' and was very soon drest. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna-Green.

Concerning Reading

He said that, for general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to; though to be sure, if a man has a science to learn,

he must regularly and resolutely advance. He added, 'what we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination half the mind is employed in fixing the attention; so there is but one half to be employed on what we read.' He told us he read Fielding's *Amelia* through without stopping. He said, 'If a man begins to read in the middle of a book and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it to go to the beginning. He may perhaps not feel again the inclination.'

Quarrel with Dr. Percy

[At Dr. Percy's, April 12th, 1778] And here I shall record a scene of too much heat between Dr. Johnson and Dr. Percy, which I should have suppressed, were it not that it gave occasion to display the truly tender and benevolent heart of Johnson, who, as soon as he found that a friend was at all hurt by any thing which he had 'said in his wrath,' was not only prompt and desirous to be reconciled, but exerted himself to make ample reparation.

Books of Travels having been mentioned, Johnson praised Pennant very highly, as he did at Dunvegan, in the Isle of Sky. Dr. Percy, knowing himself to be the heir male of the ancient Percies, and having the warmest and most dutiful attachment to the noble House of Northumberland, could not sit quietly and hear a man praised, who had spoken disrespectfully of Alnwick-Castle and the Duke's pleasure grounds, especially as he thought meanly of his travels. He therefore opposed Johnson eagerly. JOHNSON. 'Pen-

nant in what he has said of Alnwick, has done what he intended; he has made you very angry.' PERCY. 'He has said the garden is *trim*, which is representing it like a citizen's parterre, when the truth is, there is a very large extent of fine turf and gravel walks.' JOHNSON. 'According to your own account, Sir, Pennant is right. It *is* trim. Here is grass cut close, and gravel rolled smooth. Is not that trim? The extent is nothing against that; a mile may be as trim as a square yard. Your extent puts me in mind of the citizen's enlarged dinner, two pieces of roast-beef, and two puddings. There is no variety, no mind exerted in laying out the ground, no trees.' PERCY. 'He pretends to give the natural history of Northumberland, and yet takes no notice of the immense number of trees planted there of late.' JOHNSON. 'That, Sir, has nothing to do with the *natural* history; that is *civil* history. A man who gives the natural history of the oak, is not to tell how many oaks have been planted in this place or that. A man who gives the natural history of the cow, is not to tell how many cows are milked at Islington. The animal is the same, whether milked in the Park or at Islington.' PERCY. 'Pennant does not describe well; a carrier who goes along the side of Loch-lomond would describe it better.' JOHNSON. 'I think he describes very well.' PERCY. 'I travelled after him.' JOHNSON. 'And *I* travelled after him.' PERCY. 'But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do.' I wondered at Dr. Percy's venturing thus. Dr. Johnson said nothing at the time; but inflammable particles

were collecting for a cloud to burst. In a little while Dr. Percy said something more in disparagement of Pennant. JOHNSON. (pointedly.) 'This is the resentment of a narrow mind, because he did not find every thing in Northumberland.' PERCY. (feeling the stroke.) 'Sir, you may be as rude as you please.' JOHNSON. 'Hold, Sir! Don't talk of rudeness; remember, Sir, you told me (puffing hard with passion struggling for a vent,) I was shortsighted. We have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please.' PERCY. 'Upon my honour, Sir, I did not mean to be uncivil.' JOHNSON. "I cannot say so, Sir; for I *did* mean to be uncivil, thinking *you* had been uncivil.' Dr. Percy rose, ran up to him, and taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been misunderstood; upon which a reconciliation instantly took place.

Johnson on Cant

BOSWELL. 'I wish much to be in Parliament, Sir.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, unless you come resolved to support any administration, you would be the worse for being in Parliament, because you would be obliged to live more expensively.' BOSWELL. 'Perhaps, Sir, I should be the less happy for being in Parliament. I never would sell my vote, and I should be vexed if things went wrong.' JOHNSON. 'That's cant, Sir. It would not vex you more in the house than in the gallery: public affairs vex no man.' BOSWELL. 'Have not they vexed yourself a little, Sir? Have not you been vexed by all the turbulence of this reign,

and by that absurd vote of the House of Commons, "That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished?"' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I have never slept an hour less, nor eat an ounce less meat. I would have knocked the factious dogs on the head, to be sure; but I was not vexed.' BOSWELL. 'I declare, Sir, upon my honour, I did imagine I was vexed, and took a pride in it; but it was, perhaps, cant; for I own I neither ate less, nor slept less.' JOHNSON. 'My dear friend, clear your mind of cant. You may talk as other people do: you may say to a man, "Sir, I am your most humble servant." You are not his most humble servant. You may say, "These are bad times; it is a melancholy thing to be reserved to such times." You don't mind the times. You tell a man, "I am sorry you had such bad weather the last day of your journey, and were so much wet." You don't care sixpence whether he is wet or dry. You may talk in this manner; it is a mode of talking in Society; but don't think foolishly.'

Meets an Old Friend

And now [April 17th, 1778] I am to give a pretty full account of one of the most curious incidents in Johnson's life, of which he himself has made the following minute on this day: 'In my return from church, I was accosted by Edwards, an old fellow-collegian, who had not seen me since 1729. He knew me, and asked if I remembered one Edwards; I did not at first recollect the name, but gradually as we walked along, recovered it, and told him a conversation that had passed at an

ale-house between us. My purpose is to continue our acquaintance.'

It was in Butcher-row that this meeting happened. Mr. Edwards, who was a decent-looking elderly man in grey clothes, and a wig of many curls, accosted Johnson with familiar confidence, knowing who he was, while Johnson returned his salutation with a courteous formality, as to a stranger. But as soon as Edwards had brought to his recollection their having been at Pembroke-College together nine-and-forty years ago, he seemed much pleased, asked where he lived, and said he should be glad to see him in Bolt-court. EDWARDS. 'Ah, Sir! we are old men now.' JOHNSON. (who never liked to think of being old.) 'Dont let us discourage one another.' EDWARDS. 'Why, Doctor, you look stout and hearty, I am happy to see you so; for the news-papers told us you were very ill.' JOHNSON. 'Ay, Sir, they are always telling lies of *us old fellows*.'

Wishing to be present at more of so singular a conversation as that between two fellow-collegians, who had lived forty years in London without ever having chanced to meet, I whispered to Mr. Edwards that Dr. Johnson was going home, and that he had better accompany him now. So Edwards walked along with us, I eagerly assisting to keep up the conversation. Mr. Edwards informed Dr. Johnson that he had practised long as a solicitor in Chancery, but that he now lived in the country upon a little farm, about sixty acres, just by Stevenage in Hertfordshire, and that he came to London (to Barnard's Inn, No. 6), generally

twice a week. Johnson appearing to me in a reverie. Mr. Edwards addressed himself to me, and expatiated on the pleasure of living in the country. BOSWELL. 'I have no notion of this, Sir. What you have to entertain you, is, I think, exhausted in half an hour.' EDWARDS. 'What? don't you love to have hope realized? I see my grass, and my corn, and my trees growing. Now, for instance, I am curious to see if this frost has not nipped my fruit-trees.' JOHNSON. (who we did not imagine was attending,) 'You find, Sir, you have fears as well as hopes,' — So well did he see the whole, when another saw but the half of a subject.

When we got to Dr. Johnson's house, and were seated in his library, the dialogue went on admirably. EDWARDS. 'Sir, I remember you would not let us say *prodigious* at College. For even then, Sir, (turning to me,) he was delicate in language, and we all feared him.' JOHNSON. (to Edwards,) 'From your having practised the law long, Sir, I presume you must be rich.' EDWARDS. 'No, Sir; I got a good deal of money; but I had a number of poor relations to whom I gave a great part of it.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you have been rich in the most valuable sense of the word.' EDWARDS. 'But I shall not die rich.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, sure, Sir, it is better to *live* rich than to *die* rich.' EDWARDS. 'I wish I had continued at College.' JOHNSON. 'Why do you wish that, Sir?' EDWARDS. 'Because I think I should have had a much easier life than mine has been. I should have been a parson, and had a good living, like Bloxam and several others, and lived comfortably.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, the life

of a parson, of a conscientious clergyman, is not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather have Chancery suits upon my hands than the cure of souls. No, Sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life.' Here taking himself up all of a sudden, he exclaimed, 'O! Mr. Edwards! I'll convince you that I recollect you. Do you remember our drinking together at an alehouse near Pembroke gate? At that time, you told me of the Eton boy, who, when verses on our SAVIOUR's turning water into wine were prescribed as an exercise, brought up a single line, which was highly admired, —

"*Vidit et erubuit lympha pudica* DEUM."

and I told you of another fine line in Camden's *Remains*, an eulogy upon one of our Kings, who was succeeded by his son, a prince of equal merit: —

"*Mira cano, Sol occubuit, nox nulla secuta est.*"'

EDWARDS. 'You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in.' — Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Courtenay, Mr. Malone, and, indeed, all the eminent men to whom I have mentioned this, have thought it an exquisite trait of character. The truth is, that philosophy, like religion, is too generally supposed to be hard and severe, at least so grave as to exclude all gaiety.

EDWARDS. 'I have been twice married, Doctor. You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have

a wife.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and (in a solemn, tender, faultering tone) I have known what it was to *lose a wife*. It had almost broke my heart.'

EDWARDS. 'How do you live, Sir? For my part, I must have my regular meals, and a glass of good wine. I find I require it.' JOHNSON. 'I now drink no wine, Sir. Early in life I drank wine: for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal.' EDWARDS. 'Some hogsheads, I warrant you.' JOHNSON. 'I then had a severe illness, and left it off, and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one thing rather than another, nor from one kind of weather rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a difference; but I am not one of them. And as to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner, without any inconvenience. I believe it is best to eat just as one is hungry: but a man who is in business, or a man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler. I may leave this town and go to Grand Cairo, without being missed here or observed there.' EDWARDS. 'Don't you eat supper, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir.' EDWARDS. 'For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which one must pass, in order to get to bed.'

JOHNSON. 'You are a lawyer, Mr. Edwards. Lawyers know life practically. A bookish man should always have them to converse with. They have what he wants.' EDWARDS. 'I am grown old:

I am sixty-five.' JOHNSON. 'I shall be sixty-eight next birth-day. Come, Sir, drink water, and put in for a hundred.'

Mr. Edwards mentioned a gentleman who had left his whole fortune to Pembroke College. JOHNSON. 'Whether to leave one's whole fortune to a College be right, must depend upon circumstances. I would leave the interest of the fortune I bequeathed to a College to my relations or my friends, for their lives. It is the same thing to a College, which is a permanent society, whether it gets the money now or twenty years hence; and I would wish to make my relations or friends feel the benefit of it.'

This interview confirmed my opinion of Johnson's most humane and benevolent heart. His cordial and placid behaviour to an old fellow-collegian, a man so different from himself; and his telling him that he would go down to his farm and visit him, showed a kindness of disposition very rare at an advanced age. He observed, 'how wonderful it was that they had both been in London forty years, without having ever once met, and both walkers in the street too!' Mr. Edwards, when going away, again recurred to his consciousness of senility, and looking full in Johnson's face, said to him, 'You'll find in Dr. Young,

"O my coevals! remnants of yourselves!"'

Johnson did not relish this at all; but shook his head with impatience. Edwards walked off, seemingly highly pleased with the honour of having been thus noticed by Dr. Johnson. When he was gone, I said

to Johnson, I thought him but a weak man. JOHNSON. 'Why, yes, Sir. Here is a man who has passed through life without experience: yet I would rather have him with me than a more sensible man who will not talk readily. This man is always willing to say what he has to say.' Yet Dr. Johnson had himself by no means that willingness which he praised so much, and I think so justly; for who has not felt the painful effect of the dreary void, when there is a total silence in a company, for any length of time; or, which is as bad, or perhaps worse, when the conversation is with difficulty kept up by a perpetual effort?

Levellers

Dr. Johnson again insisted on the duty of maintaining subordination of rank. 'Sir, I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect, than of his money. I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them to do to me. I would behave to a nobleman as I should expect he would behave to me were I a nobleman and he Sam. Johnson. Sir, there is one Mrs. Macaulay in this town, a great republican. One day when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, "Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, Madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman; I desire that he may be

allowed to sit down and dine with us." I thus, Sir, showed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since. Sir, your levellers wish to level down as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling up to themselves. They would all have some people under them; why not then have some people above them?' I mentioned a certain authour who disgusted me by his forwardness, and by showing no deference to noblemen into whose company he was admitted. JOHNSON. 'Suppose a shoemaker should claim an equality with him, as he does with a Lord; how he would stare. "Why, Sir, do you stare? (says the shoemaker,) I do great service to society. 'Tis true I am paid for doing it; but so are you, Sir: and I am sorry to say it, paid better than I am for doing something not so necessary. For mankind could do better without your books than without my shoes." Thus, Sir, there would be a perpetual struggle for precedence were there no fixed invariable rules for the distinction of rank, which creates no jealousy, as it is allowed to be accidental.'

Quarrels with Boswell

On Saturday, May 2, [1778] I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where there was a very large company, and a great deal of conversation; but owing to some circumstance which I cannot now recollect, I have no record of any part of it, except that there were several people there by no means of the Johnsonian school; so that less attention was paid to him than usual, which put him out of humour; and upon some

Boswell Reynolds Garrick Paoli Warton
Johnson Burke Burney Goldsmith

A Literary Party at the House of Sir Joshua Reynolds

imaginary offence from me, he attacked me with such rudeness, that I was vexed and angry, because it gave those persons an opportunity of enlarging upon his supposed ferocity, and ill treatment of his best friends. I was so much hurt, and had my pride so much roused, that I kept away from him for a week; and, perhaps, might have kept away much longer, nay, gone to Scotland without seeing him again, had not we fortunately met and been reconciled. To such unhappy chances are human friendships liable.

On Friday, May 8, I dined with him at Mr. Langton's. I was reserved and silent, which I suppose he perceived, and might recollect the cause. After dinner when Mr. Langton was called out of the room, and we were by ourselves, he drew his chair near to mine, and said, in a tone of conciliating courtesy, 'Well, how have you done?' BOSWELL. 'Sir, you have made me very uneasy by your behaviour to me when we were last at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. You know, my dear Sir, no man has a greater respect and affection for you, or would sooner go to the end of the world to serve you. Now to treat me so —.' He insisted that I had interrupted him, which I assured him was not the case; and proceeded — 'But why treat me so before people who neither love you nor me?' JOHNSON. 'Well, I am sorry for it. I'll make it up to you twenty different ways, as you please.' BOSWELL. 'I said to-day to Sir Joshua, when he observed that you *tossed* me sometimes — I don't care how often, or how high he tosses me, when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground: but I do not like falling

on stones, which is the case when enemies are present. — I think this a pretty good image, Sir.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is one of the happiest I have ever heard.'

The truth is, there was no venom in the wounds which he inflicted at any time, unless they were irritated by some malignant infusion by other hands. We were instantly as cordial again as ever, and joined in hearty laugh at some ludicrous but innocent peculiarities of one of our friends.

Johnson and Mrs. Thrale

The death of Mr. Thrale had made a very material alteration with respect to Johnson's reception in that family. The manly authority of the husband no longer curbed the lively exuberance of the lady; and as her vanity had been fully gratified, by having the Colossus of Literature attached to her for many years, she gradually became less assiduous to please him. Whether her attachment to him was already divided by another object, I am unable to ascertain; but it is plain that Johnson's penetration was alive to her neglect or forced attention; for on the 6th of October this year, [1782] we find him making a 'parting use of the library' at Streatham, and pronouncing a prayer, which he composed on leaving Mr. Thrale's family: —

'Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when thou givest, and when thou takest

away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me.

'To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'

Johnson's Fracas with Osborne

I made one day very minute inquiries about the tale of his knocking down Tom Osborne the bookseller. 'And how was that affair? in earnest? do tell me, Mr. Johnson.' 'There is nothing to tell, dearest lady, but that he was insolent and I beat him, and that he was a blockhead and told of it, which I should never have done. I have beat many a fellow, but the rest had the wit to hold their tongues.'

On Choosing a Wife

'Some cunning men choose fools for their wives, thinking to manage them, but they always fail. There is a spaniel fool and a mule fool. The spaniel fool may be made to do by beating. The mule fool will neither do by words or blows; and the spaniel fool often turns mule at last: and suppose a fool to be made to do pretty well, you must have the continual trouble of making her do. Depend upon it, no woman is the worse for sense and knowledge.' Whether afterwards he meant merely to say a polite thing, or to give his opinion, I could not be sure; but he added, 'Men know that women are an over-match for them, and

therefore they choose the weakest or most ignorant. If they did not think so, they could never be afraid of woman knowing as much as themselves.'

Johnson as a Talker

Johnson's dexterity in retort, when he seemed to be driven to an extremity by his adversary, was very remarkable. Of his power in this respect, our common friend, Mr. Windham, of Norfolk, has been pleased to furnish me with an eminent instance. However unfavourable to Scotland, he uniformly gave great praise to George Buchanan, as a writer. In a conversation concerning the literary merits of the two countries, in which Buchanan was introduced, a Scotchman, imagining that on this ground he should have an undoubted triumph over him, exclaimed, 'Ah, Dr. Johnson, what would you have said of Buchanan, had he been an Englishman?' 'Why, Sir, (said Johnson, after a little pause.) I should *not* have said of Buchanan, had he been an *Englishman*, what I will now say of him as a *Scotchman*, — that he was the only man of genius his country ever produced.'

Johnson's attention to precision and clearness in expression was very remarkable. He disapproved of parentheses; and I believe in all his voluminous writings, not half a dozen of them will be found. He never used the phrases *the former* and *the latter*, having observed, that they often occasioned obscurity; he therefore contrived to construct his sentences so as not to have occasion for them, and would even rather

repeat the same words, in order to avoid them. Nothing is more common than to mistake surnames when we hear them carelessly uttered for the first time. To prevent this, he used not only to pronounce them slowly and distinctly, but to take the trouble of spelling them; a practice which I have often followed; and which I wish were general.

Such was the heat and irritability of his blood, that not only did he pare his nails to the quick; but scraped the joints of his fingers with a pen-knife, till they seemed quite red and raw.

The heterogeneous composition of human nature was remarkably exemplified in Johnson. His liberality in giving his money to persons in distress was extraordinary. Yet there lurked about him a propensity to paultry saving. One day I owned to him that 'I was occasionally troubled with a fit of *narrowness*.' 'Why, Sir, (said he,) so am I. *But I do not tell it.*' He has now and then borrowed a shilling of me; and when I asked for it again, seemed to be rather out of humour. A droll little circumstance once occurred: as if he meant to reprimand my minute exactness as a creditor, he thus addressed me; — 'Boswell, *lend* me sixpence — *not to be repaid.*'

Johnson's love of little children, which he discovered upon all occasions, calling them 'pretty dears,' and giving them sweetmeats, was an undoubted proof of the real humanity and gentleness of his disposition.

His uncommon kindness to his servants, and serious concern, not only for their comfort in this world, but their happiness in the next, was another unquestionable

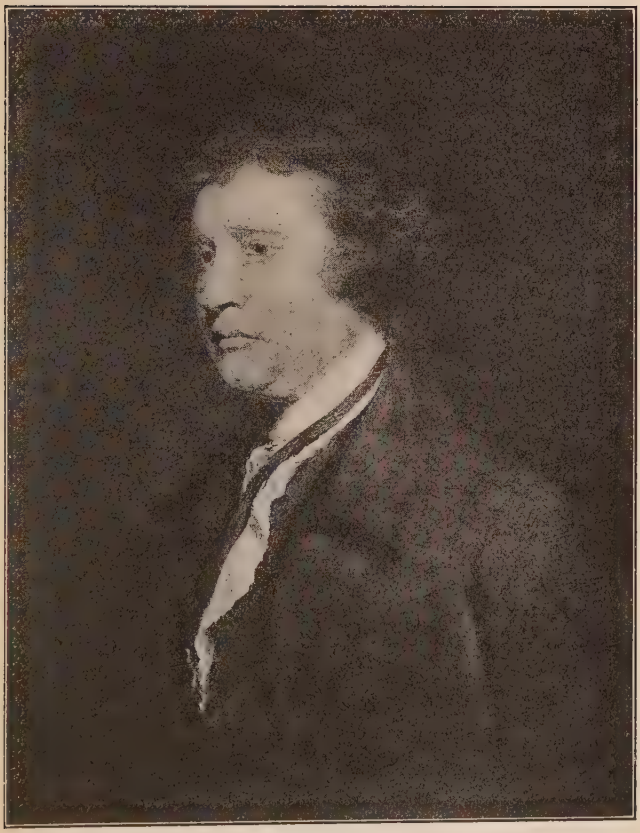
evidence of what all, who were intimately acquainted with him, knew to be true.

Nor would it be just, under this head, to omit the fondness which he shewed for animals which he had taken under his protection. I never shall forget the indulgence with which he treated Hodge, his cat: for whom he himself used to go out and buy oysters, lest the servants having that trouble should take a dislike to the poor creature. I am, unluckily, one of those who have an antipathy to a cat, so that I am uneasy when in the room with one; and I own, I frequently suffered a good deal from the presence of this same Hodge. I recollect him one day scrambling up Dr. Johnson's breast, apparently with much satisfaction, while my friend smiling and half-whistling, rubbed down his back, and pulled him by the tail; and when I observed he was a fine cat, saying, 'Why, yes, Sir, but I have had cats whom I liked better than this;' and then as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, 'but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed.'

This reminds me of the ludicrous account which he gave Mr. Langton, of the despicable state of a young Gentleman of good family. 'Sir, when I heard of him last, he was running about town shooting cats.' And then in a sort of kindly reverie, he bethought himself of his own favourite cat, and said, 'But Hodge shan't be shot; no, no, Hodge shall not be shot.'

Comments on His Friends

On the evening of Saturday, May 15 [1784], he was in fine spirits, at our Essex-Head Club. He told us,



EDMUND BURKE

'I dined yesterday at Mrs. Garrick's, with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney. Three such women are not to be found: I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superiour to them all.' BOSWELL. 'What! had you them all to yourself, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'I had them all as much as they were had; but it might have been better had there been more company there.' BOSWELL. 'Might not Mrs. Montagu have been a fourth?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, Mrs. Montagu does not make a trade of her wit; but Mrs. Montagu is a very extraordinary woman; she has a constant stream of conversation, and it is always impregnated; it has always meaning.' BOSWELL. 'Mr. Burke has a constant stream of conversation.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; if a man were to go by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed, to shun a shower, he would say — "this is an extraordinary man." If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse drest, the ostler would say — "we have had an extraordinary man here."' BOSWELL. 'Foote was a man who never failed in conversation. If he had gone into a stable —' JOHNSON. 'Sir, if he had gone into a stable, the ostler would have said, "here has been a comical fellow"; but he would not have respected him.' BOSWELL. 'And, Sir, the ostler would have answered him, would have given him as good as he brought, as the common saying is.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; and Foote would have answered the ostler. — When Burke does not descend to be merry, his conversation is very superiour indeed. There is no proportion between the powers which he shews in

serious talk and in jocularity. When he lets himself down to that, he is in the kennel.' I have in another place opposed, and I hope with success, Dr. Johnson's very singular and erroneous notion as to Mr. Burke's pleasantry. Mr. Windham now said low to me, that he differed from our great friend in this observation; for that Mr. Burke was often very happy in his merriment. It would not have been right for either of us to have contradicted Johnson at this time, in a Society all of whom did not know and value Mr. Burke as much as we did. It might have occasioned something more rough, and at any rate would probably have checked the flow of Johnson's good-humour.

His Last Illness

It is not my intention to give a very minute detail of the particulars of Johnson's remaining days, of whom it was now evident, that the crisis was fast approaching, when he must '*die like men, and fall like one of the Princes.*' Yet it will be instructive, as well as gratifying to the curiosity of my readers, to record a few circumstances, on the authenticity of which they may perfectly rely, as I have been at the utmost pains to obtain an accurate account of his last illness, from the best authority.

Having no near relations, it had been for some time Johnson's intention to make a liberal provision for his faithful servant, Mr. Francis Barber, whom he looked upon as particularly under his protection, and whom he had all along treated truly as an humble friend. Having asked Dr. Brocklesby what would be a proper an-

nuity to a favourite servant, and being answered that it must depend on the circumstances of the master; and, that in the case of a nobleman, fifty pounds a year was considered as an adequate reward for many years' faithful service; 'Then, (said Johnson,) shall I be *nobilissimus*, for I mean to leave Frank seventy pounds a year, and I desire you to tell him so.' It is strange, however, to think, that Johnson was not free from that general weakness of being averse to execute a will, so that he delayed it from time to time; and had it not been for Sir John Hawkins's repeatedly urging it, I think it is probable that his kind resolution would not have been fulfilled.

Johnson, with that native fortitude, which, amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, never forsook him, asked Dr. Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly whether he could recover. 'Give me (said he,) a direct answer.' The Doctor having first asked him if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered that he could, declared that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle. 'Then, (said Johnson,) I will take no more physick, not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to GOD unclouded.' In this resolution he persevered, and, at the same time, used only the weakest kinds of sustenance. Being pressed by Mr. Windham to take somewhat more generous nourishment, lest too low a diet should have the very effect which he dreaded, by debilitating his mind, he said, 'I will take any thing but inebriating sustenance.'

Having, as has been already mentioned, made his will on the 8th and 9th of December, and settled all his worldly affairs, he languished till Monday, the 13th of that month, when he expired, about seven o'clock in the evening, with so little apparent pain that his attendants hardly perceived when his dissolution took place.

Of his last moments, my brother, Thomas David, has furnished me with the following particulars: —

'The Doctor, from the time that he was certain his death was near, appeared to be perfectly resigned, was seldom or never fretful or out of temper, and often said to his faithful servant, who gave me this account, "Attend, Francis, to the salvation of your soul, which is the object of greatest importance:" he also explained to him passages in the scripture, and seemed to have pleasure in talking upon religious subjects.

Death and Burial

A few days before his death, he had asked Sir John Hawkins, as one of his executors, where he should be buried; and on being answered, 'Doubtless, in Westminster-Abbey,' seemed to feel a satisfaction, very natural to a Poet; and indeed in my opinion very natural to every man of any imagination, who has no family sepulchre in which he can be laid with his fathers. Accordingly, upon Monday, December 20, his remains were deposited in that noble and renowned edifice; and over his grave was placed a large blue flag-stone, with this inscription: —

'Samuel Johnson, LL.D.
Obiit xiii *die Decembris,*
Anno Domini
M. dcc. lxxxiv.
Ætatis suæ lxxv.'

His funeral was attended by a respectable number of his friends, particularly such of the members of the Literary Club as were then in town; and was also honoured with the presence of several of the Reverend Chapter of Westminster. Mr. Burke, Sir Joseph Banks, Mr. Windham, Mr. Langton, Sir Charles Bunbury, and Mr. Colman, bore his pall. His schoolfellow, Dr. Taylor, performed the mournful office of reading the burial service.

MISCELLANEOUS SAYINGS OF JOHNSON'S

An Unclubable Man

'Dr. Johnson said that Sir John Hawkins and he once belonged to the same club, but that as he (Hawkins) ate no supper after the first night of his admission, he desired to be excused paying his share. "And was he excused?" "O yes; for no man is angry at another for being inferior to himself! we all scorned him, and admitted his plea. For my part I was such a fool as to pay my share for wine, though I never tasted any. But Sir John was a most unclubable man."'

Learned Women

'Johnson, upon hearing a lady commended for her learning, said: — "A man is in general better pleased

when he has a good dinner upon his table than when his wife talks Greek. My old friend, Mrs. Carter, could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus.'''

Johnson's Frankness

'A lady once asked Johnson how he came to define *Pastern* the *knee* of a horse; instead of making an elaborate defence, as she expected, he at once answered, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance."'

Concerning Friendship

If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself left alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship in constant repair.

A Typical Johnsonian Retort

Johnson having argued for some time with a pertinacious gentleman; his opponent, who had talked in a very puzzling manner, happened to say, 'I don't understand you, Sir:' upon which Johnson observed, 'Sir, I have found you an argument; but I am not obliged to find you an understanding.'

Johnson's Opinion of Flogging

There is now less flogging in our great public schools than formerly, but then less is learned there; so that what the boys get at one end they lose at the other.

Concerning Genius

'No, Sir,' said Johnson, 'people are not born with a particular genius for particular employments or studies, for it would be like saying that a man could see a great way east, but could not west. It is good sense applied with diligence to what was at first a mere accident, and which by great application grew to be called by the generality of mankind, a particular genius.'

SELECTIONS FROM JOHNSON

Poverty in London

[From "London"]

By numbers here from shame or censure free,
All crimes are safe but hated poverty.
This, only this, the rigid law pursues,
This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse.
The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak
Wakes from his dream and labours for a joke;
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze
And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways.
Of all the griefs that harass the distressed,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
Fate never wounds more deep the generous heart,
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.
Has Heaven reserv'd in pity to the poor,
No pathless waste or undiscovered shore?
No secret island in the boundless main?
No peaceful desert yet unclaimed by Spain?
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore
And bear oppression's insolence no more.
This mournful truth is everywhere confessed
Slow rises worth by poverty depressed,
But here more slow where all are slaves to gold,
Where looks are merchandise and smiles are sold,
Where, won by bribes, by flatteries implored,
The groom retails the favours of his lord.

Youth

[From "Debate on Seamen" in Gentleman's Magazine of 1740]

Sir, the atrocious crime of being a young man which the honourable gentleman has with such spirit and decency charged upon me I shall neither attempt to palliate nor deny, but content myself with wishing that I may be one of those whose follies may cease with their youth, and not of that number who are ignorant in spite of experience. Whether youth can be imputed to any man as a reproach I will not, Sir, assume the province of determining; but surely age may become justly contemptible if the opportunities which it brings have passed away without improvement, and vice appears to prevail when the passions have subsided. The wretch that after having seen the consequences of a thousand errors continues still to blunder, and whose age has only added obstinacy to stupidity is surely the object of either abhorrence or contempt, and deserves not that his grey head should secure him from insults. Much more is he to be abhorred who as he has advanced in age has receded from virtue, and becomes more wicked with less temptation; who prostitutes himself for money which he cannot enjoy, and spends the remains of his life in the ruin of his country.

Cardinal Wolsey

[From the "Vanity of Human Wishes"]

In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey stand,
Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand:

To him the church, the realm, their powers consign,
Through him the rays of regal bounty shine,
Turn'd by his nod the stream of honour flows,
His smile alone security bestows:
Still to new heights his restless wishes tower,
Claim leads to claim, and power advances power;
Till conquest unresisted ceased to please,
And rights submitted, left him none to seize.
At length his sovereign frowns — the train of state
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.
Where'er he turns, he meets a stranger's eye,
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;
Now drops at once the pride of awful state,
The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
The regal palace, the luxurious board,
The liveried army, and the menial lord.
With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,
He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.
Grief aids disease, remember'd folly stings,
And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.
Speak thou, whose thoughts at humble peace repine,
Shall Wolsey's wealth, with Wolsey's end, be thine?
Or livest thou now, with safer pride content,
The wisest justice on the banks of Trent?
For, why did Wolsey, near the steeps of fate,
On weak foundations raise th' enormous weight?
Why but to sink beneath misfortune's blow.
With louder ruin to the gulfs below?

True Objects of Desire

[From the "Vanity of Human Wishes"]

Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?
Must dull Suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,
No cries attempt the mercies of the skies?
Inquirer, cease; petitions yet remain
Which Heaven may hear, nor deem Religion vain.
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice.
Safe in His power, whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious prayer;
Implore His aid, in His decisions rest,
Secure, whate'er He gives, He gives the best.
Yet, when the sense of Sacred Presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions and a will resign'd;
For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
For patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill;
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind Nature's signal for retreat.
These goods for man the laws of heaven ordain,
These goods He grants, who grants the power to gain.
With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

Selection from "Irene"

ACT II, SCENE VII

MAHOMET, IRENE

MAHOMET

Wilt thou descend, fair daughter of perfection,
To hear my vows, and give mankind a queen?
Ah! cease, Irene, cease those flowing sorrows,
That melt a heart impregnable till now,
And turn thy thoughts, henceforth, to love and empire
How will the matchless beauties of Irene,
Thus bright in tears, thus amiable in ruin,
With all the graceful pride of greatness heighten'd,
Amidst the blaze of jewels and of gold,
Adorn a throne, and dignify dominion!

IRENE

Why all this glare of splendid eloquence,
To paint the pageantries of guilty state?
Must I, for these, renounce the hope of heav'n,
Immortal crowns, and fulness of enjoyment?

MAHOMET

Vain raptures all. — For your inferiour natures,
Form'd to delight, and happy by delighting,
Heav'n has reserv'd no future paradise,
But bids you rove the paths of bliss, secure
Of total death, and careless of hereafter;
While heaven's high minister, whose awful volume
Records each act, each thought of sov'reign man,
Surveys your plays with inattentive glance,
And leaves the lovely trifler unregarded.

DRURY LANE THEATRE

Here Johnson's play *Irene* was produced on Monday, February 6, 1749, and ran for nine nights.

IRENE

Why then has nature's vain munificence
Profusely pour'd her bounties upon woman?
Whence, then, those charms thy tongue has deign'd to flatter,
That air resistless, and enchanting blush,
Unless the beauteous fabrick was design'd
A habitation for a fairer soul?

MAHOMET

Too high, bright maid, thou rat'st exteriour grace:
Not always do the fairest flow'rs diffuse
The richest odours, nor the speckled shells
Conceal the gem; let female arrogance
Observe the feather'd wand'rers of the sky;
With purple varied, and bedrop'd with gold,
They prune the wing, and spread the glossy plumes,
Ordain'd, like you, to flutter and to shine,
And cheer the weary passenger with musick.

IRENE

Mean as we are, this tyrant of the world
Implores our smiles, and trembles at our feet.
Whence flow the hopes and fears, despair and rapture,
Whence all the bliss and agonies of love?

MAHOMET

Why, when the balm of sleep descends on man,
Do gay delusions, wand'ring o'er the brain,
Sooth the delighted soul with empty bliss?
To want, give affluence? and to slav'ry, freedom?
Such are love's joys, the lenitives of life,
A fancy'd treasure, and a waking dream.

IRENE

Then let me at once, in honour of our sex,
Assume the boastful arrogance of man.
Th' attractive softness, and th' endearing smile,
And pow'rful glance, 'tis granted, are our own;
Nor has impartial nature's frugal hand
Exhausted all her nobler gifts on you.
Do not we share the comprehensive thought,
Th' enlivening wit, the penetrating reason?
Beats not the female breast with gen'rous passions
The thirst of empire, and the love of glory?

MAHOMET

Illustrious maid, new wonders fix me thine;
Thy soul completes the triumphs of thy face.
I thought (forgive, my fair,) the noblest aim,
The strongest effort of a female soul,
Was but to choose the graces of the day;
To tune the tongue, to teach the eyes to roll,
Dispose the colours of the flowing robe,
And add new roses to the faded cheek.
Will it not charm a mind, like thine, exalted,
To shine, the goddess of applauding nations;
To scatter happiness and plenty round thee,
To bid the prostrate captive rise and live,
To see new cities tow'r, at thy command,
And blasted kingdoms flourish, at thy smile?

IRENE

Charm'd with the thought of blessing human kind,
Too calm I listen to the flatt'ring sounds.

MAHOMET

O! seize the power to bless — Irene's nod
Shall break the fetters of the groaning Christian;
Greece, in her lovely patroness secure,
Shall mourn no more her plunder'd palaces.

IRENE

Forbear — O! do not urge me to my ruin!

MAHOMET

To state and pow'r I court thee, not to ruin:
Smile on my wishes, and command the globe.
Security shall spread her shield before thee,
And love infold thee with his downy wings.
If greatness please thee, mount th' imperial seat;
If pleasure charm thee, view this soft retreat;
Here ev'ry warbler of the sky shall sing;
Here ev'ry fragrance breathe of ev'ry spring:
To deck these bow'rs each region shall combine,
And e'en our prophet's gardens envy thine:
Empire and love shall share the blissful day,
And varied life steal, unperceiv'd, away.

Perseverance

[From the "Rambler," No. 43]

All the performances of human art at which we look with praise or wonder are instances of the resistless force of perseverance; it is by this that the quarry becomes a pyramid, and that distant countries are united with canals. If a man was to compare the

effect of a single stroke of the pickaxe, or of one impression of the spade, with the general design and last result, he would be overwhelmed by the sense of their disproportion; yet these petty operations, incessantly continued, in time surmount the greatest difficulties, and mountains are levelled and oceans bounded by the slender force of human beings.

Health

[From the "Rambler," No. 48]

Health is indeed so necessary to all the duties, as well as pleasures of life, that the crime of squandering it is equal to the folly; and he that for a short gratification brings weakness and diseases upon himself, and for the pleasure of a few years passed in the tumults of diversion and clamours of merriment condemns the maturer and more experienced part of his life to the chamber and the couch, may be justly reproached not only as a spendthrift of his own happiness, but as a robber of the public; as a wretch that has voluntarily disqualified himself for the business of his station and refused that part which Providence assigns him in the general task of human nature.

Unworldly Scholars

[From the "Rambler," No. 137]

It is too common for those who have been bred to scholastic professions, and passed much of their time in academies where nothing but learning confers honours, to disregard every other qualification, and to imagine that they shall find mankind ready to pay

homage to their knowledge and to crowd about them for instruction. They therefore step out from their cells into the open world with all the confidence of authority and dignity of importance; they look round about them at once with ignorance and scorn on a race of beings to whom they are equally unknown and equally contemptible, but whose manners they must imitate, and with whose opinions they must comply if they desire to pass their time happily among them.

Happiness at Home

[From the "Rambler," No. 68]

The great end of prudence is to give cheerfulness to those hours which splendour cannot gild, and acclamation cannot exhilarate; those soft intervals of unbended amusement, in which a man shrinks to his natural dimensions, and throws aside the ornaments or disguises, which he feels in privacy to be useless encumbrances, and to lose all effect when they become familiar. To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition, the end to which every enterprise and labour tends, and of which every desire prompts the prosecution.

It is, indeed, at home that every man must be known by those who would make a just estimate either of his virtue or felicity; for smiles and embroidery are alike occasional, and the mind is often dressed for show in painted honour and fictitious benevolence.

Every man must have found some whose lives,

in every house but his own, were a continual series of hypocrisy, and who concealed under fair appearances bad qualities, which, whenever they thought themselves out of the reach of censure, broke out from their restraint, like winds imprisoned in their caverns, and whom every one had reason to love, but they whose love a wise man is chiefly solicitous to procure. And there are others who, without any show of general goodness, and without the attractions by which popularity is conciliated, are received among their own families as bestowers of happiness, and reverenced as instructors, guardians, and benefactors.

Fame

[From the "Rambler," No. 159]

Those who are oppressed by their own reputation will, perhaps, not be comforted by hearing that their cares are unnecessary. But the truth is that no man is much regarded by the rest of the world. He that considers how little he dwells upon the condition of others will learn how little the attention of others is attracted by himself. While we see multitudes passing before us, of whom, perhaps, not one appears to deserve our notice or excite our sympathy, we should remember that we likewise are lost in the same throng; that the eye which happens to glance upon us is turned in a moment on him that follows us, and that the utmost which we can reasonably hope or fear is, to fill a vacant hour with prattle and be forgotten.

Affectation

[From the "Rambler," No. 179]

Scarce any man becomes eminently disagreeable, but by a departure from his real character, and an attempt at something for which nature or education have left him unqualified.

Happiness

[From the "Rambler," No. 203]

Every period of life is obliged to borrow its happiness from the time to come. In youth we have nothing past to entertain us, and in age we derive little from retrospect but hopeless sorrow. Yet the future likewise has its limits, which the imagination dreads to approach but which we see to be not far distant. The loss of our friends and companions impresses hourly upon us the necessity of our own departure; we know that the schemes of man are quickly at an end, that we must soon lie down in the grave with the forgotten multitudes of former ages, and yield our place to others who, like us, shall be driven a while by hope or fear about the surface of the earth, and then like us be lost in the shades of death.

Last Paragraph of the Preface to the Dictionary

Though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns;

yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it that the English Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow: and it may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and coöperating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second edition another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what could it avail me? I have protracted my work until most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds; I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

Idleness and Poverty

[From the "Idler," No. 17]

To be idle and to be poor have always been reproaches, and therefore every man endeavours with his

utmost care to hide his poverty from others, and his idleness from himself.

The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION OF A PALACE IN A VALLEY

Ye, who listen, with credulity, to the whispers of fancy, and pursue, with eagerness, the phantoms of hope; who expect, that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas, prince of Abissinia.

Rasselas was the fourth son of the mighty emperour, in whose dominions the father of waters begins his course; whose bounty pours down the streams of plenty, and scatters over half the world the harvests of Egypt.

According to the custom, which has descended, from age to age, among the monarchs of the torrid zone, Rasselas was confined in a private palace, with the other sons and daughters of Abissinian royalty, till the order of succession should call him to the throne.

The place, which the wisdom, or policy, of antiquity had destined for the residence of the Abissinian princes, was a spacious valley in the kingdom of Amhara, surrounded, on every side, by mountains, of which the summits overhang the middle part. The only passage, by which it could be entered, was a cavern that passed under a rock, of which it has been long dis-

puted, whether it was the work of nature, or of human industry. The outlet of the cavern was concealed by a thick wood, and the mouth, which opened into the valley, was closed with gates of iron, forged by the artificers of ancient days, so massy, that no man could, without the help of engines, open or shut them.

From the mountains, on every side, rivulets descended, that filled all the valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle, inhabited by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl, whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. This lake discharged its superfluities by a stream, which entered a dark cleft of the mountain, on the northern side, and fell, with dreadful noise, from precipice to precipice, till it was heard no more.

The sides of the mountains were covered with trees; the banks of the brooks were diversified with flowers; every blast shook spices from the rocks; and every month dropped fruits upon the ground. All animals that bite the grass, or browse the shrub, whether wild or tame, wandered in this extensive circuit, secured from beasts of prey, by the mountains which confined them. On one part, were flocks and herds feeding in the pastures; on another, all the beasts of chase frisking in the lawns; the sprightly kid was bounding on the rocks, the subtle monkey frolicking in the trees, and the solemn elephant reposing in the shade. All the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded.

The valley, wide and fruitful, supplied its inhabitants with the necessaries of life; and all delights and superfluities were added, at the annual visit which the emperour paid his children, when the iron gate was opened to the sound of musick; and during eight days every one, that resided in the valley, was required to propose whatever might contribute to make seclusion pleasant, to fill up the vacancies of attention, and lessen the tediousness of time. Every desire was immediately granted. All the artificers of pleasure were called to gladden the festivity; the musicians exerted the power of harmony, and the dancers showed their activity before the princes, in hope that they should pass their lives in this blissful captivity, to which those only were admitted, whose performance was thought able to add novelty to luxury. Such was the appearance of security and delight, which this retirement afforded, that they, to whom it was new, always desired, that it might be perpetual; and, as those, on whom the iron gate had once closed, were never suffered to return, the effect of long experience could not be known. Thus every year produced new schemes of delight, and new competitors for imprisonment.

The palace stood on an eminence, raised about thirty paces above the surface of the lake. It was divided into many squares or courts, built with greater or less magnificence, according to the rank of those for whom they were designed. The roofs were turned into arches of massy stone, joined by a cement that grew harder by time, and the building stood, from century

to century, deriding the solstitial rains and equinoctial hurricanes, without need of reparation.

This house, which was so large, as to be fully known to none, but some ancient officers, who successively inherited the secrets of the place, was built, as if suspicion herself had dictated the plan. To every room there was an open and secret passage, every square had a communication with the rest, either from the upper stories, by private galleries, or, by subterranean passages, from the lower apartments. Many of the columns had unsuspected cavities, in which a long race of monarchs had reposited their treasures. They then closed up the opening with marble, which was never to be removed, but in the utmost exigencies of the kingdom; and recorded their accumulations in a book, which was itself concealed in a tower not entered, but by the emperour, attended by the prince, who stood next in succession.

The Flying Machine

[From "Rasselas," Chapter VI]

Among the artists that had been allured into the happy valley, to labour for the accommodation and pleasure of its inhabitants, was a man eminent for his knowledge of the mechanic powers, who had contrived many engines both of use and recreation. By a wheel, which the stream turned, he forced the water into a tower, whence it was distributed to all the apartments of the palace. He erected a pavilion in the garden, around which he kept the air always

cool by artificial showers. One of the groves, appropriated to the ladies, was ventilated by fans, to which the rivulet that ran through it gave a constant motion; and instruments of soft music were placed at proper distances, of which some played by the impulse of the wind, and some by the power of the stream.

This artist was sometimes visited by Rasselas, who was pleased with every kind of knowledge, imagining that the time would come when all his acquisitions should be of use to him in the open world. He came one day to amuse himself in his usual manner, and found the master busy in building a sailing chariot: he saw that the design was practicable upon a level surface, and with expressions of great esteem solicited its completion. The workman was pleased to find himself so much regarded by the prince, and resolved to gain yet higher honours. "Sir," said he, "you have seen but a small part of what the mechanic sciences can perform. I have been long of opinion, that instead of the tardy conveyance of ships and chariots, man might use the swifter migration of wings; that the fields of air are open to knowledge, and that only ignorance and idleness need crawl upon the ground."

This hint rekindled the prince's desire of passing the mountains; having seen what the mechanist had already performed, he was willing to fancy that he could do more; yet resolved to inquire further, before he suffered hope to afflict him by disappointment. "I am afraid," said he to the artist, "that your imagination prevails over your skill, and that you now tell

me rather what you wish than what you know. Every animal has his element assigned him; the birds have the air, and man and beasts the earth." "So," replied the mechanist, "fishes have the water, in which yet beasts can swim by nature, and men by art. He that can swim needs not despair to fly: to swim is to fly in a grosser fluid, and to fly is to swim in subtler. We are only to proportion our power of resistance to the different density of matter through which we are to pass. You will be necessarily upborne by the air, if you can renew any impulse upon it, faster than the air can recede from the pressure."

"But the exercise of swimming," said the prince, "is very laborious; the strongest limbs are soon wearied; I am afraid the art of flying will be yet more violent, and wings will be of no great use, unless we can fly further than we can swim."

"The labour of rising from the ground," said the artist, "will be great as we see it in the heavier domestic fowls, but as we mount higher, the earth's attraction, and the body's gravity, will be gradually diminished, till we shall arrive at a region where the man will float in the air without any tendency to fall: no care will then be necessary but to move forwards, which the gentlest impulse will effect. You, sir, whose curiosity is so extensive will easily conceive with what pleasure a philosopher furnished with wings, and hovering in the sky, would see the earth, and all its inhabitants, rolling beneath him, and presenting to him successively, by its diurnal motion, all the countries within the same parallel. How must it amuse the pendent spec-

tator to see the moving scene of land and ocean, cities and deserts! To survey with equal security the marts of trade, and the fields of battle; mountains infested by barbarians, and fruitful regions gladdened by plenty and lulled by peace! How easily shall we then trace the Nile through all his passage; pass over to distant regions, and examine the face of nature from one extremity of the earth to the other!"

"All this," said the prince, "is much to be desired; but I am afraid that no man will be able to breathe in these regions of speculation and tranquillity. I have been told, that respiration is difficult upon lofty mountains, yet from these precipices, though so high as to produce great tenuity of air, it is very easy to fall: therefore I suspect, that from any height, where life can be supported, there may be danger of too quick descent."

"Nothing," replied the artist, "will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must be first overcome. If you will favour my project, I will try the first flight at my own hazard. I have considered the structure of all volant animals, and find the folding continuity of the bat's wings most easily accommodated to the human form. Upon this model I shall begin my task to-morrow, and in a year expect to tower into the air beyond the malice and pursuit of man. But I will work only on this condition, that the art shall not be divulged, and that you shall not require me to make wings for any but ourselves."

"Why," said Rasselas, "should you envy others so great an advantage? All skill ought to be exerted for

universal good; every man has owed much to others, and ought to repay the kindness that he has received."

"If men were all virtuous," returned the artist, "I should with great alacrity teach them all to fly. But what would be the security of the good, if the bad could at pleasure invade them from the sky? Against an army sailing through the clouds, neither walls, nor mountains, nor seas, could afford any security. A flight of northern savages might hover in the wind, and light at once with irresistible violence upon the capital of a fruitful region that was rolling under them. Even this valley, the retreat of princes, the abode of happiness, might be violated by the sudden descent of some of the naked nations that swarm on the coast of the southern sea."

The prince promised secrecy, and waited for the performance, not wholly hopeless of success. He visited the work from time to time, observed its progress, and remarked many ingenious contrivances to facilitate motion, and unite levity with strength. The artist was every day more certain that he should leave vultures and eagles behind him, and the contagion of his confidence seized upon the prince.

In a year the wings were finished, and, on a morning appointed, the maker appeared furnished for flight on a little promontory: he waved his pinions a while to gather air, then leaped from his stand, and in an instant dropped into the lake. His wings, which were of no use in the air, sustained him in the water, and the prince drew him to land, half dead with terror and vexation.

The Character of Polonius

[From Notes on "Hamlet"]

Polonius is a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observations, confident of his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining to dotage. His mode of oratory is truly represented as designed to ridicule the practice of those times, of prefaces that made no introduction, and of method that embarrassed rather than explained. This part of his character is accidental, the rest is natural. Such a man is positive and confident, because he knows that his mind was once strong, and knows not that it is become weak. Such a man excels in general principles, but fails in the particular application. He is knowing in retrospect, and ignorant in foresight. While he depends upon his memory, and can draw from his repositories of knowledge, he utters weighty sentences, and gives useful counsel; but as the mind in its enfeebled state cannot be kept long busy and intent, the old man is subject to sudden dereliction of his faculties; he loses the order of his ideas, and entangles himself in his own thoughts, till he recovers the leading principle, and falls again into his former train. This idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom will solve all the phenomena of the character of Polonius.

Winter

An Ode

No more the morn, with tepid rays,
Unfolds the flow'r of various hue;

Noon spreads no more the genial blaze,
Nor gentle eve distils the dew.
The ling'ring hours prolong the night,
Usurping darkness shares the day;
Her mists restrain the force of light,
And Phoebus holds a doubtful sway.
By gloomy twilight, half reveal'd,
With sighs we view the hoary hill,
The leafless wood, the naked field,
The snow-topp'd cot, the frozen rill.
No musick warbles through the grove,
No vivid colours paint the plain;
No more, with devious steps, I rove
Through verdant paths, now sought in vain.
Aloud the driving tempest roars,
Congeal'd, impetuous show'rs descend;
Haste, close the window, bar the doors,
Fate leaves me Stella, and a friend.
In nature's aid, let art supply
With light and heat my little sphere;
Rouse, rouse the fire, and pile it high,
Light up a constellation here.
Let musick sound the voice of joy,
Or mirth repeat the jocund tale;
Let love his wanton wiles employ,
And o'er the season wine prevail.
Yet time life's dreary winter brings,
When mirth's gay tale shall please no more
Nor musick charm — though Stella sings;
Nor love, nor wine, the spring restore.

Catch, then, Oh! catch the transient hour,
Improve each moment as it flies;
Life's a short summer — man a flow'r:
He dies — alas! how soon he dies!

To Mrs. Thrale

On her completing her thirty-fifth year
An Impromptu

Oft in danger, yet alive
We are come to thirty-five;
Long may better years arrive,
Better years than thirty-five!
Time his hours should never drive
O'er the bounds of thirty-five.
High to soar, and deep to dive,
Nature gives at thirty-five;
For, howe'er we boast and strive,
Life declines from thirty-five.
He that ever hopes to thrive
Must begin by thirty-five;
And all who wisely wish to wive
Must look on Thrale at thirty-five.

On the Death of Mr. Robert Levett, a Practiser in Physick

Condemn'd to Hope's delusive mine,
As on we toil from day to day,
By sudden blasts or slow decline,
Our social comforts drop away.

Well tried through many a varying year,
  See Levett to the grave descend,
Officious, innocent, sincere,
  Of every friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,
  Obscurely wise and coarsely kind;
Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny
  Thy praise to merit unrefined.

When fainting nature called for aid,
  And hovering death prepared the blow,
His vigorous remedy display'd
  The power of art without the show.

In misery's darkest cavern known,
  His useful care was ever nigh,
Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,
  And lonely want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by chill delay,
  No petty gain disdained by pride,
The modest wants of every day
  The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
  Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
And sure th' Eternal Master found
  The single talent well employed.

The busy day — the peaceful night,
  Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;

His frame was firm — his powers were bright,
Though now his *eightieth* year was nigh.

Then, with no fiery throbbing pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the nearest way.

Selections from a Journey to the Hebrides

The Heart of a Nation

These diminutive observations seem to take away something from the dignity of writing, and therefore are never communicated but with hesitation, and a little fear of abasement and contempt. But it must be remembered, that life consists not of a series of illustrious actions, or elegant enjoyments; the greater part of our time passes in compliance with necessities, in the performance of daily duties, in the removal of small inconveniencies, in the procurement of petty pleasures; and we are well or ill at ease, as the main stream of life glides on smoothly, or is ruffled by small obstacles and frequent interruption. The true state of every nation is the state of common life. The manners of a people are not to be found in the schools of learning, or the palaces of greatness, where the national character is obscured or obliterated by travel or instruction, by philosophy or vanity; nor is public happiness to be estimated by the assemblies of the gay, or the banquets of the rich. The great mass of nations is neither rich nor gay: they whose aggregate constitutes the people, are found in the streets, and

the villages, in the shops and farms; and from them collectively considered, must the measure of general prosperity be taken. As they approach to delicacy a nation is refined, as their conveniencies are multiplied, a nation, at least a commercial nation, must be denominated wealthy.

A Highland Hut

A hut is constructed with loose stones, ranged for the most part with some tendency to circularity. It must be placed where the wind cannot act upon it with violence, because it has no cement; and where the water will run easily away, because it has no floor but the naked ground. The wall, which is commonly about six feet high, declines from the perpendicular a little inward. Such rafters as can be procured are then raised for a roof, and covered with heath, which makes a strong and warm thatch, kept from flying off by ropes of twisted heath, of which the ends, reaching from the centre of the thatch to the top of the wall, are held firm by the weight of a large stone. No light is admitted but at the entrance, and through a hole in the thatch, which gives vent to the smoke. This hole is not directly over the fire, lest the rain should extinguish it; and the smoke therefore naturally fills the place before it escapes. Such is the general structure of the houses in which one of the nations of this opulent and powerful island has been hitherto content to live. Huts however are not more uniform than palaces; and this which we were inspecting was very far from one of the meanest, for it was divided into

several apartments; and its inhabitants possessed such property as a pastoral poet might exalt into riches.

When we entered, we found an old woman boiling goat-flesh in a kettle. She spoke little English, but we had interpreters at hand; and she was willing enough to display her whole system of economy. She has five children, of which none are yet gone from her. The eldest, a boy of thirteen, and her husband, who is eighty years old, were at work in the wood. Her two next sons were gone to Inverness to buy meal, by which oatmeal is always meant. Meal is considered as expensive food, and she told us, that in Spring when the goats gave milk, the children could live without it. She is mistress of sixty goats, and I saw many kids in an enclosure at the end of her house. She had also some poultry. By the lake we saw a potatoe-garden, and a small spot of ground on which stood four shucks, containing each twelve sheaves of barley. She has all this from the labour of their own hands, and for what is necessary to be bought, her kids and her chickens are sent to market.

With the true pastoral hospitality, she asked us to sit down and drink whisky. She is religious, and though the kirk is four miles off, probably eight English miles, she goes thither every Sunday. We gave her a shilling, and she begged snuff; for snuff is the luxury of a Highland cottage.

Highland Hospitality

Our reception exceeded our expectations. We found nothing but civility, elegance, and plenty. After

the usual refreshments, and the usual conversation, the evening came upon us. The carpet was then rolled off the floor; the musician was called, and the whole company was invited to dance, nor did ever fairies trip with great alacrity. The general air of festivity, which predominated in this place, so far remote from all those regions which the mind has been used to contemplate as the mansions of pleasure, struck the imagination with a delightful surprise, analogous to that which is felt at an unexpected emersion from darkness into light.

When it was time to sup, the dance ceased, and six and thirty persons sat down to two tables in the same room. After supper the ladies sung Erse songs, to which I listened as an English audience to an Italian opera, delighted with the sound of words which I did not understand.

I inquired the subjects of the songs, and was told of one, that it was a love song, and of another, that it was a farewell composed by one of the Islanders that was going, in this epidemical fury of emigration, to seek his fortune in America. What sentiments would rise, on such an occasion, in the heart of one who had not been taught to lament by precedent, I should gladly have known; but the lady, by whom I sat, thought herself not equal to the work of translating.

Highland Dowries

Women must here study to be either pleasing or useful. Their deficiencies are seldom supplied by very liberal fortunes. A hundred pounds is a portion be-

yond the hope of any but the Laird's daughter. They do not indeed often give money with their daughters; the question is, How many cows a young lady will bring her husband. A rich maiden has from ten to forty; but two cows are a decent fortune for one who pretends to no distinction.

Iona

We were now treading that illustrious Island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish, if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.

To the Right Honorable the Earl of Chesterfield

February 7, 1755

My Lord,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of the "World," that two papers in which my dictionary

is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre;* — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well-pleased to have his all neglected, be it never so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with uncon-

cern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed until I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I shall conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord,

Your lordship's most humble,

Most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON

To Mr. James Elphinston

September 25, 1750

DEAR SIR,

You have, as I find by every kind of evidence, lost an excellent mother; and I hope you will not think me incapable of partaking of your grief. I have a mother, now eighty-two years of age, whom, therefore, I must soon lose, unless it please GOD that she should rather

mourn for me. I read the letters in which you relate your mother's death to Mrs. Strahan, and think I do myself honour, when I tell you that I read them with tears; but tears are neither to *you* nor to *me* of any farther use, when once the tribute to nature has been paid. The business of life summons us away from useless grief, and calls us to the exercise of those virtues of which we are lamenting our deprivation. The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another, is to guard, and excite, and elevate, his virtues. This your mother will still perform, if you diligently preserve the memory of her life, and of her death: a life, so far as I can learn, useful, wise, and innocent; and a death resigned, peaceful, and holy. I cannot forbear to mention, that neither reason nor revelation denies you to hope, that you may increase her happiness by obeying her precepts; and that she may, in her present state, look with pleasure upon every act of virtue to which her instructions or example have contributed. Whether this be more than a pleasing dream, or a just opinion of separate spirits, is, indeed, of no great importance to us, when we consider ourselves as acting under the eye of GOD: yet, surely, there is something pleasing in the belief, that our separation from those whom we love is merely corporeal; and it may be a great incitement to virtuous friendship, if it can be made probable, that that union that has received the divine approbation shall continue to eternity.

There is one expedient by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down

minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of soothing recollection, when time shall remove her yet farther from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration. To this, however painful for the present, I cannot but advise you, as to a source of comfort and satisfaction in the time to come; for all comfort and all satisfaction is sincerely wished you by, dear Sir,

Your most obliged, most obedient,
And most humble servant,
SAM. JOHNSON

To James MacPherson

MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,

I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities since your Homer are not so formidable, and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

SAM. JOHNSON

To Mrs. Thrale

Lichfield, March 2, 1776

DEAR MADAM,

This letter will not, I hope, reach you many days before me; in a distress which can be so little relieved, nothing remains for a friend, but to come and partake it.

Poor, dear, sweet little boy! When I read the letter this day to Mrs. Aston, she said, "such a death is the next to translation." Yet, however I may convince myself of this, the tears are in my eyes, and yet I could not love him as you loved him, nor reckon upon him for a future comfort, as you and his father reckoned upon him.

He is gone, and we are going! We could not have enjoyed him long, and shall not long be separated from him. He has, probably, escaped many such pangs as you are now feeling.

Nothing remains, but that, with humble confidence, we resign ourselves to almighty goodness, and fall down, without irreverent murmurs, before the sovereign distributer of good and evil, with hope, that though sorrow endureth for a night, yet joy may come in the morning.

I have known you, madam, too long to think that you want any arguments for submission to the supreme will; nor can my consolation have any effect, but that of showing that I wish to comfort you. What can be done, you must do for yourself. Remember first, that your child is happy, and then, that he is safe,

not only from the ills of this world, but from those more formidable dangers which extend their mischief to eternity. You have brought into the world a rational being; have seen him happy during the little life that has been granted him; and can have no doubt but that his happiness is now permanent and immutable.

When you have obtained, by prayer, such tranquillity as nature will admit, force your attention, as you can, upon your accustomed duties and accustomed entertainments. You can do no more for our dear boy; but you must not, therefore, think less on those whom your attention may make fitter for the place to which he is gone. I am, dearest, dearest madam, your most affectionate humble servant.

To Mrs. Thrale

November 10, 1777

Dear Madam,

And so, supposing that I might come to town, and neglect to give you notice, or thinking some other strange thought, but certainly thinking wrong, you fall to writing about me to Tom Davies, as if he could tell you anything that I would not have you know. As soon as I came hither, I let you know of my arrival; and the consequence is, that I am summoned to Brighthelmstone, through storms, and cold, and dirt, and all the hardships of wintry journeys. You know my natural dread of all those evils; yet, to show my master an example of compliance, and

to let you know how much I long to see you, and to boast how little I give way to disease, my purpose is to be with you on Friday.

I am sorry for poor Nezzy, and hope she will, in time, be better; I hope the same for myself. The rejuvenescency of Mr. Scrase gives us both reason to hope, and, therefore, both of us rejoice in his recovery. I wish him well, besides, as a friend to my master.

I am just come home from not seeing my lord mayor's show, but I might have seen, at least, part of it. But I saw Miss Wesley and her brothers; she sends her compliments. Mrs. Williams is come home, I think, a very little better.

Every body was an enemy to that wig. — We will burn it, and get drunk; for what is joy without drink? Wagers are laid in the city about our success, which is yet, as the French call it, problematical. Well — but, seriously, I think, I shall be glad to see you in your own hair; but do not take too much time in combing, and twisting, and papering, and unpapering, and curling, and frizzling, and powdering, and getting out the powder, with all the other operations required in the cultivation of a head of hair; yet let it be combed, at least, once in three months, on the quarterday. — I could wish it might be combed once, at least, in six weeks; if I were to indulge my wishes, but what are wishes without hopes, I should fancy the operation performed — one knows not when one has enough — perhaps, every morning. I am, dearest lady, your, &c.

To Mrs. Piozzi

London, July 8, 1784

DEAR MADAM,

What you have done, however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me; I, therefore, breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere.

I wish that God may grant you every blessing, that you may be happy in this world, for its short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness, I am very ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.

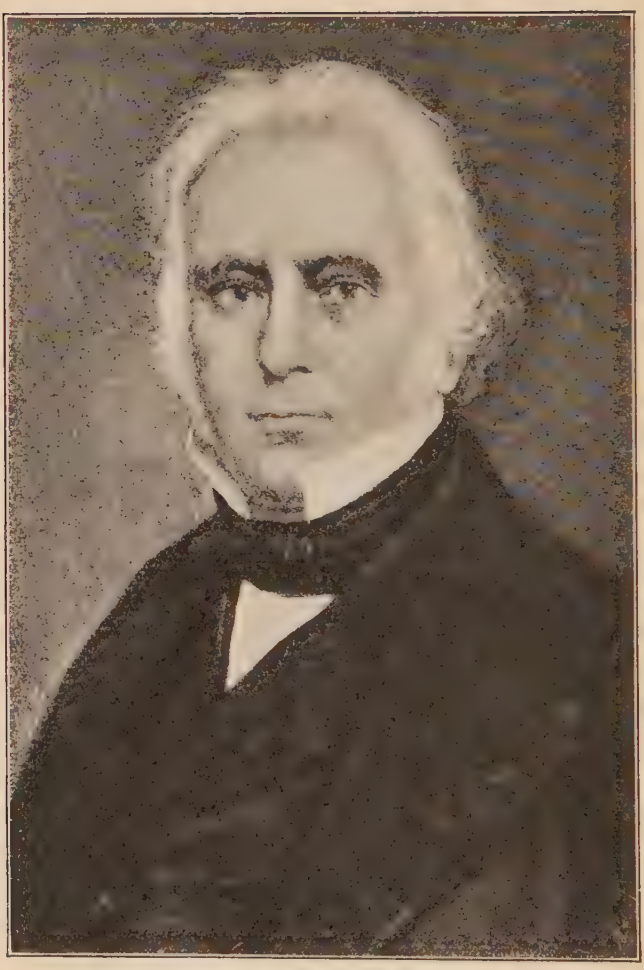
Do not think slightly of the advice which I now presume to offer. Prevail upon Mr. Piozzi to settle in England: you may live here with more dignity than in Italy, and with more security; your rank will be higher, and your fortune more under your own eye. I desire not to detail all my reasons; but every argument of prudence and interest is for England, and only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy.

I am afraid, however, that my counsel is vain, yet I have eased my heart by giving it.

When queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the archbishop of St. Andrew's, attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey; and when they came to the irremeable stream, that separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle,

and with earnestness, proportioned to her danger and his own affection, pressed her to return. The queen went forward. — If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no farther. — The tears stand in my eyes.

I am going into Derbyshire, and hope to be followed by your good wishes, for I am, with great affection, your, &c.



Thomas Babington Macaulay

SKETCH OF MACAULAY

You who are now students in the later years of the secondary school, upon taking up a volume like this, written by a man named *Macaulay*, probably recall a certain gallant soldier of Rome who performed wondrous deeds on a bridge over the Tiber — "Father Tiber" — in the "brave days of old"; or "a deafening shout" that rang down all the line, — "God save our Lord the King, King Henry of Navarre!" To you Macaulay is a poet of stirring ballads of war — of Horatius, and Ivry, and the Armada.

As a matter of fact, however, it is not as a poet at all, but as an historian and as an essayist that Macaulay is a literary master. His one slim volume of verse, *Lays of Ancient Rome*, published in 1842, was in his own estimation only a bit of recreation, a pleasant digression from the serious business of writing history and biography and critical reviews. And it is one of these biographical essays, first contributed to the Encyclopædia Britannica in 1856, and still to be found there, that is here printed for your careful study now that you have passed the sophomore age of Lars Porsena of Clusium, and King Henry of Navarre, and the ballads that sang of their deeds.

It was in the year 1800 that Macaulay was born at Rothley Temple in Leicestershire, England. Think, for a moment of that year 1800; call to mind what was happening then, who was then living. On the

throne of England was George III, weak, unhappy, sinking into hopeless insanity. In America Washington had been dead a year, and John Adams was serving his third year as second President of the United States. It was in this year 1800, three months before Macaulay was born, that the great Napoleon, at war with England and most of Europe, fought the battle of Marengo, and, thanks to his generals Desaix and Lannes, won a remarkable victory over the Austrians. (Who of you has not declaimed *The Victor of Marengo?*) It was in the last month of this same 1800, when Macaulay was six weeks old, that Napoleon again defeated the Austrians at Hohenlinden.

> "On Linden, when the Sun was low
> All bloodless lay the untrodden snow,
> And dark as winter was the flow
> Of Iser, rolling rapidly."

In 1800 died William Cowper, the author of *The Loss of the Royal George* and *The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk* and *Boadicea.* In 1800 Scott was a young lawyer of twenty-nine with neither a Waverley novel nor a *Lady of the Lake* to his credit. *The Ancient Mariner* had been published just two years; Keats was five years old, and Shelley eight, and Byron twelve. Washington Irving was a lad of eighteen studying law in New York; Cooper was a boy of eleven on the shores of Otsego Lake in the wilderness; Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson, Lincoln were yet to be born. It was in this very year 1800 that Daniel Webster, then a junior at Dartmouth, delivered his first public address.

Born in 1800, when in Europe Napoleon was at the height of his military glory, and before the birth of American literature, Macaulay lived until 1859. His life, therefore, covered the first half of the nineteenth century; his career as an author, from 1825 to 1859, coincided almost exactly with the first third of the so-called Victorian period of English Literature. Thus his years of writing correspond with the best years of Tennyson and Dickens in England; in America with those of Cooper, Bryant, Emerson, Longfellow, and especially with Irving who died also in 1859, just a month after Macaulay had passed away.

The stories that have come down to us of Macaulay's reading and writing and conversation while he was still in knickerbockers are almost unbelievable. He is often quoted as the shining example of a mental prodigy that grew up sane and strong to fulfil all the expectations of a remarkable childhood. His father was of Scotch descent, a man of great piety and dignity, who took a leading part in the movement for the abolition of slavery. His mother was of Quaker stock, simple in her tastes, devout, and conscientious in her devotion to high ideals in the training of her brilliant son.

In the home of these "plain living, high thinking" people Thomas Babington passed a happy and truly "literary childhood." We see him, for instance, reading hour after hour, "lying on a rug before the fire, with his book on the floor and a piece of bread and butter in his hand" — and this when three years old! Only a little later we find him poring over volumes of

ancient history and old novels and long critical articles in the *Edinburgh Review*. When not reading, he amused the family and guests who called by his old-mannish conversation upon serious topics of the day, by his remarkable wit, his puns, and his clever verses. When only eight, he wrote a *Universal History*, in which he tried to set forth an account of the leading events in the world's history from Creation to the year of his birth. He even tried his hand at serious poetry, composing, when a youngster of eleven, an elaborate imitation of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

The astonishingly retentive memory, for which Macaulay was later so justly famous, began to show its powers in his early youth. While still a child he seemed to read rather by glancing at whole pages than by working through sentences. Yet such rapid and apparently superficial skimming gave him a firm grasp of the general meaning, and, more amazing still, left in his mind the exact words of the author. He could commit to memory, by a single reading, passages of prose and verse that the average person would need several hours to learn. Thus, on one occasion, while waiting for his father, he read eagerly from a poem of Scott's that he had never seen before, and then later the same day recited to his mother stanza after stanza as long as she would listen to him. Many years after this, he wrote to a friend concerning a journey he had been making in Ireland: "As I could not read, I used an excellent substitute for reading. — I went through *Paradise*

Lost in my head. I could still repeat half of it, and that the best half." It was this remarkable memory, coupled with wide reading of classic and modern literature, that stored his mind with the anecdotes, the references, the allusions that abound in his later essays.

Macaulay's schooling was typical of the best that English education then afforded. From the age of twelve until he entered college at eighteen he attended a private school at Shelford, near Cambridge, where he excelled, as might be expected, in poetry, history, and the languages. For number work, however, he had no taste whatsoever — in fact he formed at this time that strong dislike for mathematics which kept him from winning highest honors at the university.

In 1818 — the year in which Irving was writing the *Sketch Book* — he entered Trinity College at Cambridge — the college where ten years later Tennyson and Thackeray and Hallam were to be students together. For mathematics, then the most highly rated subject at Trinity, Macaulay was temperamentally unsuited; but in the classics, in history, and in debating he gained renown. Twice he won the chancellor's medal for English verse; he was one of the most brilliant speakers in the Union Debating Society; he earned the Craven Scholarship in Latin; above all, he carried his reading into new fields of history and politics and literature. It was while at Cambridge, too, that he left the Tory party, in which he had been brought up, and from then to his death he remained a stout Whig, though by no means a radical.

After his graduation from Trinity in 1822, Macaulay continued his studies at Cambridge for two more years, and then in 1826 he was admitted to the bar. But like Scott and Irving, he found the law distasteful — in fact, he had so little success that he soon gave it up altogether to devote himself entirely to politics and literature.

Before leaving college he had become known as an author of promise by his contributions to Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*, especially by two war poems, *Ivry* and *Naseby*, which rank favorably with his later *Lays of Ancient Rome*. It was in 1825, the year of Webster's first Bunker Hill oration, that Macaulay won national fame. He had been invited by Jeffrey to contribute to the famous *Edinburgh Review*, then the most influential periodical in the British Isles. He accepted this honor by writing his celebrated *Essay on Milton*, which at once caught the attention of the reading public. "The Macaulay breakfast table," as Dr. Buehler says, "was covered with cards from the most distinguished personages in London society, inviting the brilliant young essayist to dinner. He was courted and admired by the most distinguished persons of the day, and from that time on he was one of the 'lions' of London society; for London soon discovered what Cambridge knew before, that he was one of the most entertaining conversers in the world."

For the thirty-four years following his *Essay on Milton*, Macaulay's life was a strenuous one. His activity in politics carried him into Parliament in

1830 at the most critical time of the great struggle to pass the Reform Bill. By his eloquence he won distinction almost immediately, and thus helped to carry the reform measures of his party to a successful issue in 1832. Two years later we find him in India as legal adviser to the Supreme Council of that great colonial empire. Soon after his return to England in 1838, he gave up active participation in politics to devote himself to his *History of England from the Accession of James II*, a work to which he gave most of his time during the rest of his life. Once more, however, toward the close of his career he received the highest political honor his country could bestow. He was made a peer of the House of Lords under the title of Baron Macaulay of Rothley; and in the same year, 1857, he was made a foreign associate of the French Academy of Moral and Political Science.

It was in moments of leisure during these thirty busy years in England and India that he dashed off those essays, biographical and critical, which are undoubtedly destined to keep Macaulay's name alive long after his History of England and long after his services as a statesman have been forgotten. Whether contributed as book reviews to magazines, or as biographical articles to the Encyclopædia Britannica, they were executed in masterly style. They contained, moreover, a wealth of information about books and men and literary customs such as can be found in no other collection of essays. In America as well as in England they were hailed with the delight that seldom greets any but the most popular novels and

plays. By this series of more than forty brilliant articles Macaulay became undoubtedly the best known English essayist of the nineteenth century.

Just two months before he died Macaulay wrote in his diary: "October 25, 1859. My birthday. I am fifty-nine years old. Well, I have had a happy life. I do not know that any man whom I have seen close has had a happier." On December 28 the end came. He was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

As a man, Macaulay was genial, kindly, unselfish, and beloved by all who knew him. "No act," says one of his biographers, "inconsistent with the strictest honor and integrity has ever been imputed to him." To his parents, his sisters, and many of his friends he was a generous benefactor. He was in the habit toward the close of his life of giving away more than a fourth of his income. Indeed, the last letter he wrote was to a poor man, and with it he enclosed twenty-five pounds.

A few days after Macaulay's death there appeared an article in *Roundabout Papers*, by the novelist Thackeray. In this little essay entitled *Nil Nisi Bonum*, or "Nothing but Good," the author of *Vanity Fair* and *Henry Esmond*, himself a Trinity College man, paid his tribute of admiration to the two illustrious authors who had died in the latter months of 1859 — to Washington Irving, the American essayist and humorist, and to Lord Macaulay, the Englishman, historian, essayist, poet, and statesman. Here are the paragraphs which Thackeray wrote about his English friend:

"Almost the last words which Sir Walter spoke to Lockhart, his biographer, were, 'Be a good man, my dear!' and with the last flicker of breath on his dying lips, he sighed a farewell to his family, and passed away blessing them.

Two men, famous, admired, beloved, have just left us, the Goldsmith and the Gibbon of our time. Ere a few weeks are over, many a critic's pen will be at work, reviewing their lives and passing judgment on their works. This is no review, or history, or criticism: only a word in testimony of respect and regard from a man of letters, who owes to his own professional labour the honour of becoming acquainted with these two eminent literary men. One was the first ambassador whom the New World of Letters sent to the Old.

As for the other writer, whose departure many friends, some few most dearly-loved relatives, and multitudes of admiring readers deplore, our republic has already decreed his statue, and he must have known that he had earned this posthumous honour. He is not a poet and man of letters merely, but citizen, statesman, a great British worthy. Almost from the first moment when he appears, amongst boys, amongst college students, amongst men, he is marked, and takes rank as a great Englishman. All sorts of successes are easy to him: as a lad he goes down into the arena with others, and wins all the prizes to which he has a mind. A place in the senate is straightway offered to the young man. He takes his seat there; he speaks when so minded, without party anger or intrigue, but not without party faith and a sort of

heroic enthusiasm for his cause. Still he is poet and philosopher even more than orator. That he may have leisure and means to pursue his darling studies, he absents himself for a while, and accepts a richly-remunerative post in the East. As learned a man may live in a cottage or a college common-room; but it always seemed to me that ample means and recognized rank were Macaulay's as of right. Years ago there was a wretched outcry raised because Mr. Macaulay dated a letter from Windsor Castle, where he was staying. Immortal gods! Was this man not a fit guest for any palace in the world? or a fit companion for any man or woman in it? I dare say, after Austerlitz, the old K. K. court officials and footmen sneered at Napoleon for dating from Schönbrunn. But that miserable 'Windsor Castle' outcry is an echo out of fast-retreating old world remembrances. The place of such a natural chief was amongst the first in the land; and that country is best, according to our British notion at least, where the man of eminence has the best chance of investing his genius and intellect.

If a company of giants were got together, very likely one or two of the mere six-feet-six people might be angry at the incontestable superiority of the very tallest of the party: and so I have heard some London wits, rather peevish at Macaulay's superiority, complain that he occupied too much of the talk, and so forth. Now that wonderful tongue is to speak no more, will not many a man grieve that he no longer has the chance to listen? To remember the talk is to wonder:

to think not only of the treasures he had in his memory, but of the trifles he had stored there, and could produce with equal readiness. Almost on the last day I had the fortune to see him, a conversation happened suddenly to spring up about senior wranglers, and what they had done in after life. To the almost terror of the persons present, Macaulay began with the senior wrangler of 1801–2–3–4, and so on, giving the name of each, and relating his subsequent career and rise. Every man who has known him has his story regarding that astonishing memory. It may be that he was not ill pleased that you should recognize it; but to those prodigious intellectual feats, which were so easy to him, who would grudge his tribute of homage? His talk was, in a word, admirable, and we admired it.

Of the notices which have appeared regarding Lord Macaulay, up to the day when the present lines are written (the 9th of January), the reader should not deny himself the pleasure of looking especially at two. It is a good sign of the times when such articles as these (I mean the articles in *The Times* and *Saturday Review*) appear in our public prints about our public men. They educate us, as it were, to admire rightly. An uninstructed person in a museum or at a concert may pass by without recognizing a picture or a passage of music, which the connoisseur by his side may show him is a masterpiece of harmony, or a wonder of artistic skill. After reading these papers you like and respect more the person you have admired so much already. And so with regard to Macaulay's style there may be faults of course — what critic can't point them

out? But for the nonce we are not talking about faults: we want to say *nil nisi bonum*. Well — take at hazard any three pages of the *Essays* or *History;* — and, glimmering below the stream of the narrative, as it were, you, an average reader, see one, two, three, a half-score of allusions to other historic facts, characters, literature, poetry, with which you are acquainted. Why is this epithet used? Whence is that simile drawn? How does he manage, in two or three words, to paint an individual, or to indicate a landscape? Your neighbour, who has *his* reading, and his little stock of literature stowed away in his mind, shall detect more points, allusions, happy touches, indicating not only the prodigious memory and vast learning of this master, but the wonderful industry, the honest, humble previous toil of this great scholar. He reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels a hundred miles to make a line of description.

Many Londoners — not all — have seen the British Museum Library. I speak *à coeur ouvert*, and pray the kindly reader to bear with me. I have seen all sorts of domes of Peters and Pauls, Sophia, Pantheon, — what not? — and have been struck by none of them so much as by that catholic dome in Bloomsbury, under which our million volumes are housed. What peace, what love, what truth, what beauty, what happiness for all, what generous kindness for you and me, are here spread out! It seems to me one cannot sit down in that place without a heart full of grateful reverence. I own to have said my grace at the table, and to have thanked heaven for this my English birth-

right, freely to partake of these bountiful books, and to speak the truth I find there. Under the dome which held Macaulay's brain, and from which his solemn eyes looked out on the world but a fortnight since, what a vast, brilliant, and wonderful store of learning was ranged! what a lore would he not fetch for you at your bidding! A volume of law, or history, a book of poetry familiar or forgotten (except by himself who forgot nothing), a novel ever so old, and he had it at hand. I spoke to him once about *Clarissa*. 'Not read *Clarissa!*' he cried out. 'If you have once thoroughly entered on *Clarissa* and are infected by it, you can't leave it. When I was in India I passed one hot season at the hills, and there were the Governor-General, and the Secretary of Government, and the Commander-in-Chief, and their wives. I had *Clarissa* with me: and, as soon as they began to read, the whole station was in a passion of excitement about Miss Harlowe and her misfortunes, and her scoundrelly Lovelace! The Governor's wife seized the book, and the Secretary waited for it, and the Chief Justice could not read it for tears!' He acted the whole scene: he paced up and down the Athenaeum library: I dare say he could have spoken pages of the book — of that book, and of what countless piles of others!

In this little paper let us keep to the text of *nil nisi bonum*. One paper I have read regarding Lord Macaulay says "he had no heart." Why, a man's books may not always speak the truth, but they speak his mind in spite of himself: and it seems to me this man's

heart is beating through every page he penned. He is always in a storm of revolt and indignation against wrong, craft, tyranny. How he cheers heroic resistance; how he backs and applauds freedom struggling for its own; how he hates scoundrels, ever so victorious and successful; how he recognizes genius, though selfish villains possess it! The critic who says Macaulay had no heart, might say that Johnson had none: and two men more generous, and more loving, and more hating, and more partial, and more noble, do not live in our history. Those who knew Lord Macaulay knew how admirably tender, and generous, and affectionate he was. It was not his business to bring his family before the theatre footlights, and call for bouquets from the gallery as he wept over them.

If any young man of letters reads this little sermon — and to him, indeed, it is addressed — I would say to him, "Bear Scott's words in your mind, and 'be good, my dear.'" Here are two literary men gone to their account, and *laus Deo*, as far as we know, it is fair, and open, and clean. Here is no need of apologies for shortcomings, or explanations of vices which should have been virtues but for unavoidable, &c. Here are two examples of men most differently gifted: each pursuing his calling; each speaking his truth as God bade him; each honest in his life; just and irreproachable in his dealings; dear to his friends; honoured by his country; beloved at his fireside. It has been the fortunate lot of both to give incalculable happiness and delight to the world, which thanks them in return with kindliness, respect, and affection."

EXAMPLES OF MACAULAY'S STYLE

Characteristics of Macaulay's Style

(Here are eight of the more striking characteristics of Macaulay as a writer of English prose. With each are given illustrations from the *History of England*, or from the critical essays. Try to find further examples of these peculiarities of style in the *Life of Samuel Johnson* which you have just studied.)

I. Balanced Construction. Contrast. Antithesis

"A large portion of his sentences contain words and clauses in formal balance." William Minto.

"His words overflow with antithetical forms of expression and thoughts condensed into sparkling epigrams."
E. P. Whipple.

[From the "Essay on Milton"]

We charge him [Charles I] with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates, and the defense is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him.

II. Wealth of Illustration. Allusions to History and Literature

"Take at hazard any three pages, and you see one, two, three, a half dozen, a score of allusions to other historic facts, characters, literature, and poetry. He reads twenty books to write a sentence."

W. M. Thackeray.

"Macaulay's knowledge was not only very wide; it was both thoroughly accurate and instantly ready. For this stream of apt illustrations he was indebted to his extraordinary memory and his rapid eye for contrasts and analogies."

John Morley.

[From the "History of England"]

Scotsmen, whose dwellings and whose food were as wretched as those of the Icelanders of our time, wrote Latin verse with more than the delicacy of Vida, and made discoveries in science which would have added to the renown of Galileo.

[From the "Essay on John Bunyan"]

The fame of Bunyan during his life, and during the century which followed his death, was indeed great, but was almost entirely confined to religious families of the middle and lower classes. Very seldom was he during that time mentioned with respect by any writer of great literary eminence. Young coupled his prose with the poetry of the wretched D'Urfey. In the Spiritual Quixote, the adventures of Christian are ranked with those of Jack the Giant-Killer and John Hickathrift. Cowper ventured to praise the great allegorist, but did not venture to name him. It is a

significant circumstance that, till a recent period, all the numerous editions of the "Pilgrim's Progress" were evidently meant for the cottage and the servants' hall.

III. Specific and Picturesque Detail

"Vague or colorless generalizations are not his. By a few picturesque details, by an apt illustration, he makes his picture forceful and vivid." Anonymous.

[From the "Essay on Madame D'Arblay"]

But the great show of the night was the Russian Ambassador, Count Orloff, whose gigantic figure was all in a blaze with jewels, and in whose demeanour the untamed ferocity of the Scythian might be discerned through a thin varnish of French politeness. As he stalked about the small parlour, brushing the ceiling with his toupee, the girls whispered to each other, with mingled admiration and horror, that he was the favoured lover of his august mistress; that he had borne the chief part in the revolution to which she owed her throne; and that his huge hands, now glittering with diamond rings, had given the last squeeze to the windpipe of her unfortunate husband.

[From the "Essay on Warren Hastings"]

India and its inhabitants were not to him, as to most Englishmen, mere names and abstractions, but a real country and a real people. The burning sun, the strange vegetation of the palm and the cocoa-tree, the rice-field, the tank, the huge trees, older than the Mogul empire, under which the village crowds as-

semble; the thatched roof of the peasant's hut; the rich tracery of the mosque where the imaum prays with his face to Mecca, the drums and banners and gaudy idols, the devotee swinging in the air, the graceful maiden, with the pitcher on her head, descending the steps to the riverside, the black faces, the long beards, the yellow streaks of sect, the turbans and the flowing robes, the spears and the silver maces, the elephants with their canopies of state, the gorgeous palanquin of the prince, all these things were to him as the objects amidst which his own life had been passed.

IV. Clearness

"He thought little of recasting a whole paragraph in order to obtain a more lucid arrangement."

A. P. Russell.

"Clearness is the first of the cardinal virtues of his style; and nobody ever wrote more clearly than Macaulay."

Leslie Stephen.

"Macaulay never wrote an obscure sentence in his life."

John Morley.

[From the "Essay on Addison"]

The heroic couplet was then the favorite measure. The art of arranging words in that measure, so that the lines may flow smoothly, that the accents may fall correctly, that the rhymes may strike the ear strongly, and that there may be a pause at the end of every distich, is an art as mechanical as that of mending a kettle or shoeing a horse, and may be learned by any human

being who has sense enough to learn anything. But, like other mechanical arts, it was gradually improved by means of many experiments and many failures. It was reserved for Pope to discover the trick.

[From the "History of England"]

Where there was a good path he seldom failed to choose it. But now he had only a choice among paths every one of which seemed likely to lead to destruction. From one faction he could hope for no cordial support. The cordial support of the other faction he could retain only by becoming the most factious man in his kingdom, a Shaftesbury on the throne. If he persecuted the Tories their sulkiness would infallibly be turned into fury. If he showed favor to the Tories, it was by no means certain that he would retain their good-will; and it was but too probable that he might lose his hold on the hearts of the Whigs. Something, however, he must do: something he must risk: a Privy Council must be sworn in: all the great offices, political and judicial, must be filled. It was impossible to make an arrangement that would please everybody and difficult to make an arrangement that would please anybody: but an arrangement must be made.

V. Eloquence. Oratorical Climax

"Of climax, the coping-stone of the emphatic style, he is a master."

T. E. Kebbel.

"Certain passages of Macaulay's prose rise higher than the finest raptures of his poetry, and the term Eloquence will measure the loftiest reaches of either."

George Gilfillan.

"Occasionally he used the long, climatic period, consisting of a number of clauses in the same construction, increasing gradually in strength so as to form a climax."

WILLIAM MINTO.

"Rarely has eloquence been more captivating than Macaulay's."

[From the "Essay on Addison"]

Such a mark of national respect was due to the unsullied statesman, to the accomplished scholar, to the master of pure English eloquence, to the consummate painter of life and manners. It was due, above all, to the great satirist, who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it; who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform; and who reconciled wit and virtue after a long and disastrous separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy and virtue by fanaticism.

[From the "Essay on Hastings"]

The time was approaching when our island, while struggling to keep down the United States of America, and pressed with a still nearer danger by the too just discontents of Ireland, was to be assailed by France, Spain, and Holland and to be threatened by the armed neutrality of the Baltic; when even our maritime supremacy was to be in jeopardy; when hostile fleets were to command the straits of Calpe and the Mexican sea; when the British flag was to be scarcely able to protect the British Channel.

VI. Closely Knit Paragraphs Developed from Topic Sentences

"Macaulay's paragraphs are models of unity and clearness. Beginning frequently with a short topical sentence, they develop step by step in a stately march that carries the reader smoothly and easily to their conclusion."

R. J. Smith.

[From the "Essay on Oliver Goldsmith"]

In 1773 Goldsmith tried his chance at Covent Garden with a second play, *She Stoops to Conquer*. The manager was not without great difficulty induced to bring this piece out. The sentimental comedy still reigned; and Goldsmith's comedies were not sentimental. The *Goodnatured Man* had been too funny to succeed; yet the mirth of the *Goodnatured Man*, was sober when compared with the rich drollery of *She Stoops to Conquer*, which is, in truth, an incomparable farce in five acts. On this occasion, however, genius triumphed. Pit, boxes, and galleries, were in a constant roar of laughter. If any bigoted admirer of Kelly and Cumberland ventured to hiss or groan, he was speedily silenced by a general cry of "turn him out," or "throw him over." Two generations have since confirmed the verdict which was pronounced on that night.

[From the "Essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson"]

What a singular destiny has been that of this remarkable man! To be regarded in his own age as a classic, and in ours as a companion. To receive from

his contemporaries that full homage which men of genius have in general received only from posterity! To be more intimately known to posterity than other men are known to their contemporaries! That kind of fame which is commonly the most transient is, in his case, the most durable. The reputation of those writings, which he probably expected to be immortal, is every day fading; while those peculiarities of manner and that careless table-talk, the memory of which, he probably thought, would die with him, are likely to be remembered as long as the English language is spoken in any quarter of the globe.

VII. Power of Personal Portraiture and Vivid Description

"He had a delight in gathering and a power of painting personal peculiarities." J. H. Sterling.

"He had a keen eye for the slightest hint that could be turned to account in sketching the portrait of a man." C. Pebody.

[From the "Essay on Addison"]

Steele had left college, been disinherited, led a vagrant life, served in the army, and had written comedies. He was one of those people whom it is impossible either to hate or to respect. His temper was sweet, his affections warm, his spirits lively, his passions strong, and his principles weak. His life was spent in sinning and repenting. He was, however, so good-natured that it was impossible to be seriously angry with him.

[From the "Essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson"]

In the foreground is that strange figure which is as familiar to us as the figures of those among whom we have been brought up — the gigantic body, the huge massy face, seamed with the scars of disease; the brown coat, the black worsted stockings, the gray wig with a scorched foretop; the dirty hands, the nails bitten and pared to the quick. We see the eyes and mouth moving with convulsive twitches; we see the heavy form rolling; we hear it puffing; and then comes the "Why, sir!" and the "What then, sir?" and the "No, sir!" and the "You don't see your way through the question, sir!"

VIII. Sacrifice of Truth and Historical Facts to Form and Rhetorical Effect. Prejudice. Exaggeration

"That his love for printed diction leads him into many errors, cannot be denied." E. P. Whipple.

"The desire for effect at any cost makes some of his characters, such as Bacon, mere heaps of contradictory qualities." Leslie Stephen.

"He has been accused of coloring his facts to suit the prejudice in favor of modern cultivation and to gratify his favorite passion for antithesis." William Minto.

"His prejudices were sometimes strong and extreme, but they were honest." A. H. Stephens.

[From the "Essay on Bacon"]

The difference between the soaring angel and the creeping snake was but a type of the difference between

Bacon the Philosopher and Bacon the Attorney-General, Bacon seeking for truth and Bacon seeking for the seals.

[From the "History of England"]

Meanwhile the unquiet brain of Monmouth was teeming with strange designs. He had now reached a time of life at which youth could no longer be pleaded as an excuse for his faults; but he was more wayward and eccentric than ever. Both in his intellectual and in his moral character there was an abundance of those fine qualities which may be called luxuries and a lamentable deficiency of those solid qualities which are of the first necessity. He had brilliant wit and ready invention without common sense, and chivalrous generosity and delicacy without common honesty.

SUBJECTS FOR ORAL AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION

I

SHORT TALKS OR THEMES BASED UPON MACAULAY'S ESSAY

1. Johnson's Boyhood and Youth
2. Preparing for College
3. Michael Johnson and His Bookstore
4. Johnson at Oxford
5. Trying to Earn a Living
6. Johnson's Infirmities of Body and Mind
7. Mrs. Elizabeth Porter
8. The Profession of Authorship in England in 1737
9. Johnson's Early Struggles in London
10. The Effects of Poverty upon Johnson
11. *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1738
12. Johnson's Work for the Magazine
13. The Poem *London*
14. Johnson and Alexander Pope
15. The *Life of Savage*
16. Johnson's Relations with the Earl of Chesterfield
17. *The Vanity of Human Wishes*
18. The Failure of *Irene*
19. The *Rambler* and the *Idler*
20. Johnson's Dictionary
21. The Novel *Rasselas*
22. The Pension and Its Effect upon Johnson
23. The Edition of Shakespeare
24. Johnson as a Talker
25. The Literary Club
26. James Boswell

27. The Thrales
28. Johnson's Strange Household
29. The *Journey to the Hebrides*
30. Johnson and His Critics
31. *Taxation no Tyranny*
32. The *Lives of the Poets*
33. Johnson's Last Years and Death
34. Johnson's Friends and Associates
35. Johnson's Influence upon His Times
36. Macaulay's Exaggerations in the Essay
37. Johnson's Three Greatest Works
38. "Johnsonese"
39. Johnson's Fame since His Death
40. Macaulay's Style

II

QUOTATIONS FROM MACAULAY'S ESSAY FOR CLASS DISCUSSION, OR FOR TOPIC SENTENCES OF WRITTEN PARAGRAPHS

1. "From sixteen to eighteen he resided at home, and was left to his own devices."

2. "Eighteen months passed away, and only three pupils came to his academy."

3. "He was sick of life, but he was afraid of death."

4. "Distress made him not servile, but reckless and ungovernable."

5. "Pope's attempt failed, and Johnson remained a Bookseller's hack."

6. "The just resentment of Johnson was not to be so appeased."

7. "After nine representations the play was withdrawn."

8. "Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper."

9. "The Dictionary, though it raised Johnson's fame, added nothing to his pecuniary means."

10. "He long continued to live upon the fame which he had already won."

11. "As respected style, he spoke far better than he wrote."
12. "No man was ever written down but by himself."
13. "He was in no sense a statesman."
14. "His *Taxation No Tyranny* was a pitiable failure."
15. "It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that was ever brought together."
16. "In a happy moment he (Boswell) fastened himself upon Johnson."
17. "During twenty years the disciple continued to worship the master."
18. "Boswell's book has done for him (Johnson) more than the best of his own books could do."
19. "The old philosopher is still among us."
20. "He was both a great and a good man."

III

LONGER COMPOSITIONS SUGGESTED BY MACAULAY'S ESSAY

1. Johnson's Reading and Study
2. A College Entrance Examination at Oxford in 1730
3. An Usher in a Grammar School. (Read Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* as quoted in the notes, p. 189.)
4. A Literary Adventurer in 1735
5. Johnson and Garrick
6. The *Gentleman's Magazine* Contrasted with a Magazine of To-Day
7. Johnson at the First Night of *Irene*
8. The Drury Lane Theatre
9. Johnson's Conversation as Recorded by Boswell
10. The Club Meets with Sir Joshua
11. Johnson Reads the Manuscript of the *Vicar of Wakefield*
12. An Evening at the Mitre Tavern
13. The London of Johnson's Day
14. Johnson Meets Benjamin Franklin. (Write an account of an imaginary meeting and conversation.)
15. Johnson's Letters

Subjects for Composition

16. Johnson as a Poet
17. Johnson's Style as Writer and Talker, — a Contrast
18. Boswell meets Dr. Johnson
19. The Greatness of Boswell's Biography
20. Other Books by James Boswell

NOTES ON MACAULAY'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

PAGE 1, LINE 3. **Michael Johnson**: According to biographers Samuel seems to have inherited many traits from his father, such as his huge frame, his obstinacy, his melancholy, and his habits of study. See page 59.

4. Lichfield: a town in the heart of the beautiful "Merry England" about 100 miles north of London in Staffordshire. Besides being the birthplace of Johnson, it is also famous for its beautiful cathedral. Addison and Garrick both attended the grammar school. A statue of Johnson may now be seen in the square opposite the house where he was born. See page 61.

5. midland counties: the counties in the central part of England as you will see if you consult a map. Two of these counties are Staffordshire, in which Lichfield is situated, and Worcestershire.

12. Churchman: supporter of the Church of England or Episcopal Church.

13. qualified himself . . . office: Before any man could hold office he was obliged to take an oath of allegiance to the government. This law was passed in 1688 after the revolution which took place in that year.

14. sovereigns in possession: William of Orange and Mary, who were placed on the throne by the Revolution of 1688, which deposed James II. They ruled from 1689 to 1702 and were followed by Anne (1702–1714).

15. Jacobite: a supporter of the Stuart family after its overthrow in 1688. This means that Michael Johnson was a staunch supporter of the Established Church and really a believer in the "divine right of kings." Because of policy he was outwardly loyal to the existing government.

27. royal touch: From the time of Edward the Confessor in the eleventh century to Johnson's day, there existed in England a belief that scrofula, then called "king's evil," could be cured by the touch of the sovereign. Shakespeare alludes to this custom in Macbeth, Act IV, Scene III.

> "'Tis call'd the evil:
> A most miraculous work in this good king;
> Which often, since my here-remain in England,
> I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,
> Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people
> . . . . . he cures,
> Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
> Put on with holy prayers."

It is said that 100,000 people were touched by Charles II. The practice continued until the beginning of the Hanoverian line.

PAGE 2, LINE 4. **piece of gold**: This gold piece is now in the British Museum.

Queen Anne: Anne Stuart, the successor of William and Mary. Her name has become famous because of the great men who lived and wrote during her reign.

19. read what was interesting: not always a good rule to go by, but Johnson, as Boswell tells us, read as inclination suggested; his inclination, however, differed from that of the modern boy as did his idea of what was interesting. Perhaps you can discuss this point to advantage. See page 62.

25. Attic poetry: that of the highest Greek standard. Usually taken to mean Athenian because Athens was the leading city of Attica.

30. Augustan: the highest Latin standard because during the reign of the Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar, the greatest Latin writers lived — Virgil, Horace, and others.

31. great public schools: Eton and Rugby. These schools are in no sense public, as we use the word, but are supported by endowment and fees of pupils. The two mentioned above are the most famous. Have you read *Tom Brown at Rugby?*

PAGE 3, LINE 3. **sixth form at Eton**: Classes in these schools are called forms and the sixth is, therefore, the senior class.

4. restorers of learning: those literary men who were responsible for the revival of Greek and Roman, or classic, literature in Europe during the fifteenth century, which period is known as the *Renaissance* or rebirth of learning. The movement began in Italy, but soon spread throughout Europe to England.

6. Petrarch (1304–1374): one of the most famous Italian poets, who may be classed as one of the *restorers of learning* referred to above; in fact he is often alluded to as the "father of the revival of learning." He wrote in both Latin and Italian, but his fame rests chiefly on his sonnets.

19. either university: either Oxford or Cambridge, which were then the only universities in England.

21. Pembroke College: English universities contain several colleges, each of which has its separate government, chapels, dormitories, and tutors. The university holds examinations and grants degrees. The system may be compared to our national government and that of the states. If you ever go to Pembroke you will be shown many memorials of Johnson, among them his desk and a blue teapot and mug, out of which he drank his " oceans " of tea.

29. Macrobius: an obscure Latin writer of the fifth century.

31. equal attainments: Johnson had read widely for two years before he entered college. He himself said of his reading at this time, " not voyages and travels, but all literature, Sir, all ancient writers, all manly: though but little Greek; but in this irregular manner I had looked into a great many books, which were not commonly known at the university, where they seldom read any books, but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now master of Pembroke College, told me I was the best qualified for the university that he had ever known come there." (Boswell's *Life of Johnson.*)

PAGE 4, LINE 1. **about three years**: He was actually there only about fourteen months.

5. Christ Church: This is even now the most fashionable of all the colleges at Oxford. You can imagine how the students scorned the "miserably poor" ungainly, ragged Johnson. Many famous men were students at Christ Church College, among them Edward VII, Gladstone, Duke of Wellington, and Ruskin.

8. new pair: In *Heroes and Hero-Worship* Carlyle says of this episode: "It is a type of the man's life, this pitching away of the shoes. An original man; — not a secondhand, borrowing, or begging man. Let us stand on our own basis, at any rate! On such shoes as we ourselves can get."

10. gentleman-commoner: one who paid his way, especially at "commons," which word is used even in American colleges in referring to a common dining-room. Many poor students were dependent upon funds furnished by the college. They were called pensioners. In *Tom Brown at Oxford* Hardy is a pensioner. Oliver Goldsmith's college life was made miserable by these "gentlemen commoners," who patronized or ignored him, a sensitive pensioner.

12. gross disrespect: This is an example of the exaggeration to which Macaulay was prone. There is no proof that Johnson was leader "in every mutiny," mentioned below.

22. Pope's Messiah: a Biblical poem written by Alexander Pope, who was the literary leader of England between Dryden and Johnson. In this poem he imitated Virgil; hence Virgilian in the next sentence. Johnson's father published the poem without his son's consent, which displeased Johnson, who recognized its weakness.

24. read . . . himself: Pope praised the poem and said, "The writer of this poem will leave it a question for posterity whether his or mine be the original." *Johnsonian Miscellanies.*

27. Bachelor of Arts: Three years' residence was required for this degree, the first given to a student. After December 12, 1729 Johnson was at Oxford less and less, although his

name remained on the books until October 8, 1731. Therefore he had to leave at this time without a degree.

PAGE 5, LINE 21. **At a dinner table**: This passage is a good example of Macaulay's power of vivid description by accumulating detail after detail. At the same time he exaggerates even here, for probably Johnson did not habitually "twitch off a lady's shoe."

PAGE 6, LINE 29. **Henry Hervey**: son of the Earl of Bristol and brother of Lord John Hervey. Johnson himself alluded to him with gratitude as Macaulay suggests on page 10.

30. **Gilbert Walmesley**: a well-known English lawyer, noted also for his scholarly attainments. In Johnson's youth he and Garrick often dined with Walmesley. That Johnson appreciated his kindness and his charm is shown in the following passage from the *Lives of the Poets:* "I knew him very early; he was one of the first friends that literature procured me, and I hope that, at least, my gratitude made me worthy of his notice.

"His studies had been so various, that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance with books was great, and what he did not immediately know, he could, at least, tell where to find."

PAGE 7, LINE 7. **usher**: Johnson defines this word as "an underteacher." Goldsmith in the *Vicar of Wakefield* describes the business of being an usher as follows:

"Upon my arrival in town, sir, my first care was to deliver your letter of recommendation to our cousin, who was himself in little better circumstances than I. My first scheme, you know, sir, was to be usher at an academy; and I asked his advice on the affair. Our cousin received the proposal with a true sardonic grin. 'Ay,' cried he, 'this is indeed a very pretty career that has been chalked out for you. I have been an usher at a boarding-school myself; and may I die by an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be an under-turnkey in

Newgate. I was up early and late: I was browbeat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys within, and never permitted to stir out to meet civility abroad. But are you sure you are fit for a school? Let me examine you a little. Have you been bred apprentice to the business?' — 'No.' — 'Then you won't do for a school. Can you dress the boys' hair?' — 'No.' — 'Then you won't do for a school. Have you had the smallpox?' — 'No.' — 'Then you won't do for a school. Can you lie three in a bed?' 'No.' — 'Then you will never do for a school. Have you got a good stomach?' — 'Yes.' — 'Then you will by no means do for a school. No, sir: if you are for a genteel, easy profession, bind yourself seven years an apprentice to turn a cutler's wheel; but avoid a school by any means.'"

11. Birmingham: a manufacturing city not far from Lichfield. The "literary drudgery" referred to was hack writing for a bookseller and publisher of the *Birmingham Journal*.

14. Latin book about Abyssinia: a book by Father Lobo, a Portuguese priest. Johnson received five guineas for making this translation, which was from a French version of the original.

16. Politian, Angelus (1454–1494): one of the most eminent of the restorers of learning. He was the most intimate friend of Lorenzo of Florence and was the greatest Italian lyric poet of the fifteenth century.

21. Mrs. Elizabeth Porter: Mrs. Porter was ten years older than Johnson and brought him a property of eight hundred pounds. That Macaulay in the two paragraphs erred not only in good taste, but also in statement of fact is very evident. Carlyle, who is much more fair and accurate, says that Johnson's nickname for her was Tetty and that his "deathless affection for his Tetty was always venerable and noble." See page 63.

27. Queensberrys and Lepels: families of rank and fashion in England.

30. seldom . . . fashion: As Boswell says that Johnson

in his youth had known many women of rank and breeding, this is probably not a true statement.

PAGE 8, LINE 4. **with a readiness**: Carlyle thinks that it took some courage to accept so awkward and penniless a lover.

18. **advertised for pupils**: The advertisement in the *Gentleman's Magazine* read — "Young Gentlemen are boarded and taught the Greek and Latin languages by Samuel Johnson." See page 64.

22. **painted grandmother**: Macaulay certainly uses little delicacy in drawing his picture.

25. **David Garrick** (1716–1779): Born in Lichfield, Garrick and his brother were Johnson's first pupils. At an early age he showed great power as a mimic, and when he was eleven years old, he managed a play in which he was the leading actor. Johnson refused to write a prologue for this early effort.

In 1736 Garrick set out with his master for London where his genius finally made him the greatest actor of the period. His versatility was remarkable, for he not only succeeded in every kind of acting — pantomime, farce, comedy, and tragedy — but he wrote farces and comic pieces, managed and produced plays, conversed entertainingly, and was a member of Johnson's famous club. He became manager of Drury Lane Theatre in 1747 for which occasion Johnson wrote a famous prologue.

Garrick remained the leader of the stage during his lifetime and besides doing much to purify and improve the drama, his greatest service to mankind was the revival of Shakespeare's plays. In these he played with equal power the leading rôles in both comedy and tragedy. In 1776 he retired from the stage and enjoyed a leisure well deserved, at a beautiful villa at Hampton.

Three years later he was buried in Westminster Abbey beneath the monument of Shakespeare. On his memorial in Lichfield are inscribed Johnson's words from *Lives of the Poets:* "I am disappointed by that stroke of death which has

eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."

PAGE **9**, LINE **1**. **Irene**: Johnson's only dramatic poem. Garrick produced it later, but Johnson himself admitted that it was too imitative of Greek verse. The story on which it is founded is thus given in Hawkins's *Life of Johnson:*

Mahomet the Great, first emperor of the Turks, in the year 1453 laid siege to the city of Constantinople, then possessed by the Greeks, and, after an obstinate resistance, took and sacked it. Among the many young women whom his commanders thought fit to lay hands on and present to him was one named Irene, a Greek, of incomparable beauty and such rare perfection of body and mind, that the emperor, becoming enamored of her, neglected the care of his government and empire for two whole years, and thereby so exasperated the Janizaries, that they mutinied and threatened to dethrone him.

To prevent this mischief, Mustapha Bassa, a person of great credit with him, undertook to represent to him the great danger to which he lay exposed by the indulgence of his passion: he called to his remembrance the character, actions, and achievements of his predecessors, and the state of his government; and, in short, so roused him from his lethargy, that he took a horrible resolution to silence the clamors of his people by the sacrifice of this admirable creature. Accordingly, he commanded her to be dressed and adorned in the richest manner that she and her attendants could devise, and against a certain hour issued orders for the nobility and leaders of his army to attend him in the great hall of his palace.

When they were all assembled, himself appeared with great pomp and magnificence, leading his captive by the hand, unconscious of guilt and ignorant of his design. With a furious and menacing look, he gave the beholders to understand that he meant to remove the cause of their discontent; but bade them first view that lady, whom he held with his left hand, and say whether any of them, possessed of a jewel

so rare and precious, would for any cause forego her; to which they answered that he had great reason for his affection toward her. To this the emperor replied, that he would convince them that he was yet master of himself. And having so said, presently, with one of his hands catching the fair Greek by the hair of the head, and drawing his falchion with the other, he, at one blow, struck off her head, to the great terror of them all; and having so done, he said unto them, "Now by this judge whether your emperor is able to bridle his affections or not."

Also see pages 67 and 122.

4. Never, since literature: Note the force of the paragraph which follows. It is certainly an arraignment of conditions during Johnson's time. Literary fame in those days meant not only persistent work, but privations and mortifications of the most harrowing sort.

9. a pension: From early times pensions were customarily bestowed on eminent literary men.

13. several writers: Sir Walter Scott received £15,000 for four novels and Thackeray £4000 for one. Perhaps Macaulay exaggerates, but when we consider the prices paid even for short stories and poems at the present time, writers in Johnson's time did seem inadequately rewarded.

21. Pope, Alexander (1688–1744): the dictator of all things literary between Dryden and Johnson. All three belonged to the classical school of poets. Pope's first publication occurred the year of Johnson's birth and the last on the morning of the publication of Johnson's first poem, *London*. Pope's translation of Homer made him financially independent.

27. Thomson, James (1700–1748): a great Scotch poet, who led a revolt against the artificiality of Pope. His greatest poem is *The Seasons*, which describes scenes and occupations of the four seasons, thus setting forth the charms of nature to the dwellers of the city.

28. Fielding (1707–1754): Henry Fielding was the greatest English novelist of the eighteenth century, his most famous novel being *Tom Jones*. At the time alluded to here, how-

ever, he was writing plays of which *Pasquin* was one, running sixty nights.

29. The Beggar's Opera: a burlesque on Italian opera written by John Gay (1685–1732). It was extraordinarily popular, running for sixty-three days in London. After a second season it was played in many places in Great Britain. Recently it has been most successfully revived and produced both in England and in America.

PAGE **10**, LINE **8**. **porter's knot**: a pad placed on the head to make carrying of burdens easier.

16. Hervey: See note on page 189.

25. Drury Lane: a famous street in the heart of London near the Strand. For over two centuries it has been the site of Drury Lane Theatre.

PAGE **11**, LINE **22**. **Osborne . . . Harleian Library**: The Harleian Library was a famous collection belonging to Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, one of Queen Anne's prime ministers. At his death the manuscripts were purchased by the government and placed in the British Museum, but Osborne, a bookseller, bought the books and pamphlets, of which there were nearly half a million. Desiring an introduction to his Catalogue, a bulky affair, he employed Johnson to write it. Johnson later wrote also the preface to the *Harleian Miscellany*, which was a reprint of some of the rare pamphlets in the collection. As to the affair alluded to here, Boswell says, "The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. 'Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop: it was in my own chamber.'" See page 107.

28. Cave . . . Magazine: Edward Cave (1691–1754) was a printer best known as the owner and publisher of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, the first magazine as the word is now used. He also owned the *Rambler* and published Johnson's *Life of Savage*. Johnson paid many tributes to Cave although he did not approve of his character as a "paymaster."

PAGE 12, LINE 3. **Parliamentary intelligence**: The forbidding of the printing of speeches without leave was done in 1641 for the first time. In Johnson's time the House of Commons was more strict than ever about publicity, which resulted in the employing of the device mentioned in the following sentences. Other magazines had other methods, but it resolved itself into a battle for freedom of the press, which did not end until 1771, when the reporting of speeches and debates became a familiar custom.

4. It . . . safe: Penalties were provided as a punishment.

8. Senate of Lilliput: Lilliput and the names following were taken from Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in which the author satirizes the England of his day.

10. Duke of Newcastle: secretary of state at the time alluded to and afterwards Prime Minister.

11. Lord Hardwicke: Lord Chancellor.

William Pulteney: a great orator and statesman, at this time leader of the Whigs.

14. He . . . opposition: Johnson had to draw freely upon his imagination for the debates between the *ministry*, that is, the government then in power, and the opposition, or, at this time, the Whigs.

18. Tory: The terms *Whig* and *Tory* were first applied to English political parties during the reign of Charles II in 1679. *Whig* came from Scotland, where it was applied to the Covenanters of the west of Scotland from the cry of "whiggam," used with the horses by the peasants. In England it was the name used, at first in scorn, to designate the country party. *Tory*, a name given to brigands in Ireland, was applied to the court party in Parliament. At present *Whig* and *Tory* have given way to *Liberal* and *Conservative*.

21. Capulets . . . Montagues: the names of rival families in Verona, Italy. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is based on the bitter enmity between them.

22. Blues . . . Greens: The Roman chariot race was first a contest between two charioteers, wearing white and

red liveries. Later blue and green were added and the spectators were divided according to the colors they supported. The feeling was so intense that fierce fights took place especially between the Blues and Greens. This war was carried on even in Constantinople, where it reached terrible proportions after the fall of the Roman empire.

27. Sacheverell: Dr. Henry Sacheverell was a famous high church preacher, who had been driven from his pulpit by the Whigs. Of course he became at once popular in Tory communities and had doubtless impressed even a three-year-old Johnson.

PAGE **13**, LINE **2**. **Jacobitical**: Supporters of the Royalist party were called Jacobites. The term *Jacobite* (from the Latin Jacobus, James,) was applied to the party in Great Britain, which, after the Revolution of 1688, supported the dethroned James II and the Stuarts. It was more numerous in Scotland than in England.

6. Tom Tempest: a character in one of Johnson's *Idler* papers, pictured as a ridiculously strong Jacobite.

8. Laud: Laud was Archbishop of Canterbury and one of the most unscrupulous advisers of Charles I. Macaulay is unjust in his estimate, for Laud was far from being a weakling. Johnson admired him because he was a conservative.

12. Hampden: When Charles I needed money and feared to call a meeting of Parliament, he discovered an old law which empowered him to levy a tax, called "ship-money," without the consent of Parliament. In 1636 John Hampden, a spirited patriot, refused to pay the tax, thus beginning a definite resistance to the king, which led to the Civil War. Macaulay has made him the subject of one of his best essays.

14. Falkland and Clarendon: both Royalists, but opposed to "ship-money." Macaulay uses them to show that even Royalists were against this unjust tax. Falkland, however, went back to the Royalists and was killed in the Civil War. Clarendon, also, returned to the king's party and was prime minister under Charles II.

15. Roundheads: a name scornfully applied to the Puritans by Royalists because the London 'prentice lads who were fighting on the Puritan side wore their hair short.

23. those golden days: Daniel Defoe in 1703 was punished quite severely for publishing anonymously a slight criticism of certain acts of Parliament.

30. aversion to the Scotch: This feeling of Johnson's was very well known and many allusions were made to it. He admitted that "much may be made of a Scotchman, if he be caught young." It was quite possible that he was many times aiming at Boswell. See page 88.

PAGE **14**, LINE **3**. **Great Rebellion**: the Royalist name for the Puritan Revolution.

9. Whig . . . it: The passage alluded to is as follows:

"That Johnson was the author of the debates during that period was not generally known; but the secret transpired several years afterwards, and was avowed by himself on the following occasion. Mr. Wedderburne (now Lord Loughborough), Dr. Johnson, Dr. Francis (the translator of Horace), the present writer, and others, dined with the late Mr. Foote. An important debate towards the end of Sir Robert Walpole's administration being mentioned, Dr. Francis observed, 'That Mr. Pitt's speech, on that occasion, was the best he had ever read.' He added, 'That he had employed eight years of his life in the study of Demosthenes, and finished a translation of the celebrated orator, with all the decorations of style and language within the reach of his capacity; but he had met with nothing equal to the speech above mentioned.' Many of the company remembered the debate; and some passages were cited, with the approbation and applause of all present.

"During the ardor of conversation Johnson remained silent. As soon as the warmth of praise subsided, he opened with these words: 'That speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter-street.' The company was struck with astonishment. Dr. Francis asked, 'How that speech could be written by him?' 'Sir,' said Johnson, 'I wrote it in Exeter-street. I never had been

in the gallery of the House of Commons but once. Cave had interest with the door-keepers. He, and the persons employed under him, gained admittance; they brought away the subject of discussion, the names of the speakers, the side they took, and the order in which they rose, together with notes of the arguments advanced in the course of the debate. The whole was afterwards communicated to me, and I composed the speeches in the form which they now have in the Parliamentary debates.'

"To this discovery Dr. Francis made answer: 'Then Sir, you have exceeded Demosthenes himself; for to say, that you have exceeded Francis's Demosthenes, would be saying nothing.' The rest of the company bestowed lavish encomiums on Johnson: one, in particular, praised his impartiality; observing, that he dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties. 'That is not quite true,' said Johnson; 'I saved appearances tolerably well; but I took care that the WHIG DOGS should not have the best of it.'" (Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I, 378–9.)

19. Juvenal: a great Roman satirical poet. Johnson imitated him in his poem, *London*.

23. Horace's Satires: Horace was one of the greatest Latin poets of the Augustan Age. His satires were translated by Pope, and Johnson translated several of his odes.

PAGE **15**, LINE **25**. **Boyse**: Samuel Boyse, an Irish poet, always poor and now forgotten.

30. Hoole: called the metaphysical tailor because he was taught by a tailor uncle. He translated Tasso and other Latin works.

PAGE **16**, LINE **2**. **Palmanazar**, George: a fictitious name of a Frenchman, who deceived Europe and England. He pretended to be a Japanese convert to Christianity from Formosa. Such was his power that he wrote a fabricated *Description of Formosa*, which deceived even the Royal Society. Later he repented, confessed, and retired to the

study of theology. Johnson had so much respect for his ability that he never differed with him.

8. Richard Savage (1697–1743): an interesting figure in Johnson's circle, probably the most congenial of these early companions. His fame rests on his friendship with Johnson and the *Life of Savage*. See page 66.

10. blue ribbons . . . Square: Blue ribbons were worn by members of the Order of the Garter. St. James's Square was one of the most fashionable parts of London. The whole expression, then, means people of fashion.

13. Newgate: one of the most notorious of London prisons. In Johnson's time punishment for even slight crimes was very heavy.

23. Piazza . . . Garden: An arcade or covered walk ran around Covent Garden, which is the square where the famous Market now stands. It was formerly the "convent" garden for the monks of Westminster.

31. opposition: the party not in power in Parliament.

PAGE **17**, LINE **14**. **Grub Street**: "the name of a street in London much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called Grub Street." (Johnson's *Dictionary*.)

28. Warburton: Bishop Warburton was an eminent critic, who also edited Shakespeare. He and Johnson had great respect for each other.

PAGE **18**, LINE **2**. **Dictionary**: Before Johnson's time no dictionary worthy of the name had appeared. Johnson's *Dictionary* was, therefore, an epoch-making event. It established the spelling of modern English, which proved to be unfortunate, because Johnson was unfitted for this task. Professor Lounsbury quite properly says, "The spelling of English continues to be probably the most vicious to be found in any cultivated tongue that ever existed."

For *Preface* to the *Dictionary*, see page 129.

8. Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773): a famous English statesman. He is best known by his *Letters to His Son*.

Johnson says that, with certain omissions, "it should be put into the hands of every young gentleman."

18. by . . . desirous: This passage is another example of exaggeration on the part of Macaulay.

31. huge volumes: The dictionary was finally published in two thick folios, which is the largest form of regularly printed books.

PAGE **19**, LINE **6**. **Tenth . . . Juvenal**: Juvenal, the great Roman satirist, wrote sixteen satires in which he reviewed the illustrious men of all ages.

9. fall of Wolsey: Cardinal Wolsey was the chief minister of Henry VIII. He was finally arrested for high treason and died before his trial. For the couplets referred to see page 119.

12. Sejanus: Minister of Emperor Tiberius of Rome. After the Emperor's retirement to Capri, Sejanus became absolute ruler of Rome. His excesses grew so unpopular that he was disgraced and killed. The *wonderful lines* referred to are printed below and are taken from Dryden's translation.

"Some ask for envy'd power; which public hate
Pursues, and hurries headlong to their fate:
Down go the tithes; and the statue crown'd,
Is by base hands in the next river drown'd.
The guiltless horses, and the chariot wheel,
The same effects of vulgar fury feel. . . .
"Adorn your doors with laurels; and a bull,
Milk-white, and large, lead to the Capitol;
Sejanus, with a rose, is dragg'd along;
The sport and laughter of the giddy throng! . . .
They follow fortune, and the common cry
Is still against the rogue condemn'd to die. . . .
'Come let us haste, our loyal zeal to show,
And spurn the wretched corpse of Caesar's foe.'" . . .

22. Hannibal: the great Carthaginian general of the Second Punic War.

Charles: Charles XII of Sweden, who was a famous general.

26. Demosthenes: the great Greek orator, who conquered the defect of stammering by his own efforts. He is considered the greatest orator in the world.

Cicero: the greatest Roman orator and second only to Demosthenes.

PAGE **20**, LINE **1. Goodman's Fields**: a London theatre of a humble sort, near the Tower. It was made so famous by Garrick that it became fashionable.

4. Drury Lane Theatre: the most popular and famous of London theatres.

29. Irene: See page 192.

PAGE **21**, LINE **17. Tatler and Spectator**: periodicals founded by Richard Steele in 1709 and 1711 respectively. Addison contributed largely to their success.

19. The Lay Monastery . . . works: less famous periodicals of the time.

PAGE **22**, LINE **1. Richardson** (1689–1761): Samuel Richardson was the greatest novelist of the eighteenth century next to Fielding. *Pamela*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, and *Sir Charles Grandison* are his best known novels.

3. Young (1681–1765): a poet famous for his poem *Night Thoughts*, which Johnson greatly admired.

Hartley: David Hartley, a physician and philosopher, who influenced the thought of his time.

4. Bubb Dodington: a patron of writers. Many dedications were addressed to him.

9. Prince Frederic: the oldest son of George II, and the father of George III. As he died before his father, his son inherited the throne.

12. Leicester House: at that time the London residence of the Prince of Wales.

PAGE **23**, LINE **12. Sir Roger . . . Abbey**: famous characters and incidents in the *Spectator* papers. These are all by Addison. Has Macaulay any reason for choosing these rather than any by Steele?

19. Squire Bluster . . . Ajut: characters and incidents in the *Rambler*.

PAGE **24**, LINE **3. Gunnings**: two beautiful sisters of Irish family, who literally took London by storm and, although poor, married men of rank and wealth just before Mrs. Johnson's death.

Lady Mary (1689–1762): Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, a very brilliant and witty woman, best known for her *Letters*, which are still read. In one of them she wrote that Johnson's *Rambler* followed the *Spectator* as "a pack-horse would follow a hunter."

6. Monthly Review: a Whig journal which Johnson detested.

26. In two . . . World: After reading these two papers, Johnson remarked to Garrick, "I have sailed a long and painful voyage round the world of the English language; and does he now send out two cock-boats to tow me into harbor?" Johnson's definition of a patron is interesting in this connection: "commonly a wretch who supports with insolence and is paid with flattery."

PAGE **25**, LINE **7. In a letter**: For the full text of this letter, see page 147. It has often been called the declaration of independence of authorship.

10. In the preface: For the passage referred to see page 129.

15. Horne Tooke: the pseudonym of John Horne, a philologist and politician, who criticised the etymology of Johnson in the *Dictionary*.

24. The definitions: Some of these are amusing and show Johnson's prejudices. *Lexicographer* is defined as "a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge," and is included among the inhabitants of Grub Street. *Oats* is "a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people." Whig is simply "the name of a faction."

PAGE **26**, LINE **1. Teutonic language**: a group of tongues derived from dialects spoken by the old Teutons or Germans. This group includes modern German, Dutch, Scandinavian,

and English which are thus distinguished from the Romance languages, that is, those taken from the Latin.

3. Junius and Skinner: seventeenth-century scholars who devoted themselves to the study of Old English and the other Teutonic languages. Of scientific philology as now understood little was known in their day, or in Johnson's. See allusion in *Preface*, page 129.

12. Spunging-houses: In the *Dictionary* Johnson defines these as follows: "a house to which debtors are taken before commitment to prison, where the bailiffs sponge upon them, or riot at their cost."

27. Jenyns's Inquiry: This *Inquiry* was written by Soames Jenyns, an accurate thinker, in a rather absurd style, which lent itself to Johnson's criticism.

PAGE 27, LINE 17. **Rasselas**: Boswell says that "if Johnson had written nothing else, *Rasselas* would have rendered his name immortal in the world of letters. It has been translated into most, if not all, of the modern languages." It is really not a romance but a series of essays. The fact that the setting is out of England was nothing unusual at this time. Macaulay's criticism in the following paragraphs is far from just. For passages from *Rasselas*, see page 131.

19. Lydia Languish: a character in Sheridan's comedy *The Rivals*. She delighted in romantic novels.

PAGE 28, LINE 20. **Newton**: Sir Isaac Newton, who discovered the law of gravitation.

23. Bruce's Travels: Bruce was the most celebrated African traveller before Livingstone. His *Travels* was not published until after Johnson had written *Rasselas*.

28. Mrs. Lennox: a novelist whom Johnson praised and whose friend he was.

29. Mrs. Sheridan: the mother of the playwright. She was a novelist and a friend of Johnson's.

PAGE 29, LINE 10. **a writer . . . Delphi**: Macaulay is hardly fair here as Johnson, in criticising Shakespeare, the

poet spoken of, although he alludes to the anachronisms, also characterizes any objections to them as "the petty cavils of petty-minds."

12. Aristotle: a Greek philosopher, who lived long after the time of Hector, one of the heroes of the Trojan War. The play alluded to is *Troilus and Cressida*.

Julio Romano: an Italian painter of the eighteenth century, rather too late for Delphi, which was the home of the Oracle of Apollo. *A Winter's Tale* is the play alluded to.

17. reigning dynasty: the House of Hanover, then on the throne of England.

28. Lord Privy Seal: a minister, who has charge of the seal affixed to minor state documents. At this time he was Lord Gower. In a conversation with Boswell on the political allusions which he had inserted in his Dictionary Johnson said: "You know, Sir, Lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant 'one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter,' I added, *sometimes we say a Gower*. Thus it went to the press: but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out."

PAGE **30**, LINE **4**. **George the Third**: He became king in 1760 and reigned during the American Revolution.

7. The city . . . hands: London was becoming Whig and Oxford, Tory. Cavendishes and Bentincks were representative Whig families; Somersets and Wyndhams were Tories. Note that Macaulay is paving the way for the announcement in the last sentences of the paragraph.

11. Lord Bute: Earl of Bute, who later became George III's prime minister.

15. pension: In America the pension given to war veterans is a common custom. In England, however, the pension is a reward given for civil service and also for any distinctive service like literary achievement. Johnson defines the word as follows: "an allowance made to anyone without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country."

PAGE **31**, LINE **20**. **He . . . spirit**: In 1762 a young girl, living in Cock Lane, a district of London, pretended to have communication with the spirit world. The affair attracted the attention of many famous men, among them Johnson, who investigated and, according to Boswell, was one of the first to discover the deception. This paragraph is another of Macaulay's misrepresentations.

Clerkenwell: a district in London, where, at St. John's Gate, Cave published the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

29. Churchill: a powerful satirist whose popularity did not extend beyond his own time. The satire referred to here is *The Ghost* in which Johnson is the *Pomposo* of the following lines:

> " Pomposo, insolent and loud,
> Vain idol of a scribbling crowd,
> Whose very name inspires an awe,
> Whose ev'ry word is Sense and Law."

PAGE **32**, LINE **16**. **Polonius**: the father of Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. For the passage referred to see page 139.

17. Wilhelm Meister: *Wilhelm Meister's Apprentice* was a novel written by Goethe, the great German poet. It contains much remarkable criticism of Shakespeare.

19. It . . . difficult: Many critics do not wholly agree with Macaulay. Sidney Lee speaks of Johnson's appreciation of Shakespeare as seen in his preface and elsewhere.

PAGE **33**, LINE **7**. **Ben**: Ben Jonson was the greatest Elizabethan playwright except Shakespeare. Macaulay probably calls him *Ben* here to distinguish him from Johnson.

15. Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles: three great Greek dramatists.

18. Massinger . . . Fletcher: minor dramatists of the Elizabethan period and forerunners of Shakespeare. How would reading their plays help Johnson?

28. Doctor's degree: honorary degree given persons of literary or other eminence.

29. Royal Academy: The Royal Academy was founded in 1768 by George III to encourage the cultivation of arts. Sir Joshua Reynolds was its first president and Johnson was appointed Professor of Ancient Literature. Goldsmith and Boswell were also members. These professorships were merely honorary titles without salary.

30. King . . . interviewed: See page 82.

PAGE **35**, LINE **12**. **a club**: In the day when London was crowded with clubs of all sorts, the fact that this one was designated *The Club* shows that it was preëminent. It still flourishes. In 1864 its centennial was celebrated with great ceremony. Johnson defines a club as "an assembly of good fellows, meeting under certain conditions." To describe a man fitted by temperament to be a congenial member of a club, he invented the adjective *clubable*. See page 115.

17. trunk-maker and the pastry-cook: These men used old paper in their callings, and as paper was very scarce and expensive, they used to buy old books for their purposes.

21. Goldsmith (1728–1774): Oliver Goldsmith, poet, novelist, essayist, dramatist, was one of the most tragic figures of his time. Yet someone has called him "the most beloved of English writers." Johnson knew him intimately and helped him out of many difficulties. As an example of "light literature" we might mention *She Stoops to Conquer*, which still remains one of the most popular of comedies. Two of his poems were *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. His most famous writing is probably *The Vicar of Wakefield*. For Johnson's feeling about him and this last-named book, see pages 76 and 89.

One of Johnson's most famous sayings about Goldsmith was, "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had."

22. Reynolds (1723–1792): Sir Joshua Reynolds was one of the most famous of English portrait painters. He painted Johnson's portrait many times. He proposed *The Club* and was devoted to its members.

Burke (1729–1797): Edmund Burke was a politician and orator of rare depth. He should be dear to Americans because of his eloquence in their behalf before the Revolution. He was one of the greatest masters of prose in the eighteenth century. Although he and Johnson differed politically, they got the keenest enjoyment in each other's company and a deep affection existed between them.

24. Gibbon (1737–1794): Edward Gibbon is one of the greatest of the historians. His *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is said to owe its perfection of style to the influence of Johnson.

Jones: Sir William Jones was a great Oriental linguist as well as jurist and scholar.

25. Garrick: See note on page 191.

31. Bennet Langton (1737–1801): a Greek scholar, best known for his friendship with Johnson, who dearly loved him. He once said of him, "I know not who will go to Heaven if Langton does not."

PAGE **36**, LINE **2. Topham Beauclerk** (1739–1780): a country gentleman of rank, also known chiefly through his intimacy with Johnson. The chief reason for his fondness for both these young men lay in their very difference from him.

12. To this day: 1839, when Macaulay was made a member.

18. James Boswell (1740–1795): the most famous of biographers. He was born in Edinburgh, "a gentleman of ancient blood," he says of himself. He was educated in the law at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow and later became a member of both the Scottish and the English bar. In 1763 he sought an introduction to Johnson, which he obtained. From that time he was with his idol at intervals, probably about two years in all. Johnson went with him on the famous journey to the Hebrides about which Boswell writes so much more entertainingly than Johnson.

As Boswell showed such marked literary ability, he became a member of *The Club* in 1773. Johnson gave Boswell much

material for the famous biography and thoroughly approved of it. In 1791, seven years after Johnson's death, the biography was published and had at once unprecedented popularity. Four years later when he was at work upon the third edition, Boswell died. See page 57 and following.

25. Southern Cross: a constellation in the Southern Hemisphere, situated near the Antarctic Circle and never visible in northern latitudes. It consists of four bright stars, seemingly in form of a cross.

PAGE **37**, LINE **2. Wilkes**: John Wilkes was a notorious agitator who was best known for obtaining from Parliament freedom of the press and freedom of election. He was aided by the Bill of Rights Society.

4. Whitefield (1714–1770): George Whitefield was probably one of the greatest preachers in the world. Next to Wesley, he was the greatest Methodist revivalist. He preached in the open air and his voice had a wonderful carrying quality. During his stay in America, Benjamin Franklin gave him his support and in his *Autobiography* pays him a tribute which it is worth your while to read. Whitefield died in Massachusetts.

15. What . . . baby: an example of the kind of question asked by Boswell for the purpose of starting a discussion, all of which was material for his biography. There follows a dialogue taken from Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

Johnson. — "Nay, sir, it was not the wine that made your head ache, but the sense I put into it."

Boswell. — "What, sir; will sense make the head ache?"

Johnson. — "Yes, sir, when it is not used to it."

16. water-drinker: Johnson himself confesses to wine-drinking and indeed seems to have avoided it because he feared drinking to excess.

PAGE **39**, LINE **5. Southwark . . . Streatham**: Southwark was a borough of London on the south side of the Thames River. The brewery spoken of here was founded by Thrale. Streatham was a residential suburb still farther south.

26. Buck and Maccaroni: slang phrases of Johnson's time, meaning very much the same as *swell* and *dude*. They are not so " obsolete " as Macaulay suggests, as they appear in *Yankee Doodle*.

PAGE **40**, LINE **11. Williams**: Mrs. Williams was the daughter of a highly educated Welsh physician and was herself well educated. She also had a little property. Johnson was very fond of her and treated her with the greatest respect.

15. Mrs. Desmoulins: the daughter of Johnson's godfather, a physician of note. Late in life when she was left destitute, she was welcomed by Johnson, who is said to have paid her a guinea a week.

21. Levett: previously a waiter in a coffee house. Goldsmith said of him, " He is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough for Johnson." Johnson wrote a poem on his death. See page 141.

26. Frank: Johnson's kindness to servants was well-known and Frank was no exception.

31. The Mitre Tavern: " The Mitre Tavern still stands in Fleet Street: but where now is its Scot-and-lot paying, beef-and-ale loving, cock-hatted, potbellied Landlord; its rosy-faced, assiduous Landlady, with all her shining brass-pans, waxed tables, well-filled larder-shelves; her cooks, and boot-jacks, and errand-boys, and watery-mouthed hangers-on? Gone! Gone! The becking waiter, that with wreathed smiles was wont to spread for Samuel and Bozzy their 'supper of the gods,' has long since pocketed his last sixpence; and vanished, sixpences and all, like a ghost at cockcrowing." (Carlyle's *Review of Boswell's Johnson.*)

In recent years the old tavern was burned.

PAGE **41**, LINE **7. Osborne . . . Chesterfield**: Recall the incidents referred to here.

14. Hebrides: the islands off the western coast of Scotland, sometimes called the Western Islands.

25. Highland line: the border between the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland. The term *Highland* is used to

include the region north of and including the Grampian Mountains.

PAGE **42**, LINE **4**. **Journey to the Hebrides**: The real title is *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland.*

11. His . . . Scotch: See page 143.

17. Oxonian: one who was educated at Oxford University.

18. Presbyterian: the form of religion most prevalent in Scotland.

20. Berwickshire and **East Lothian**: districts in Northern Scotland.

23. Lord Mansfield: William Murray, the most distinguished lawyer of his time. He was chief justice of the King's Bench for thirty-two years.

PAGE **43**, LINE **7**. **Macpherson**: James Macpherson was a Scottish schoolmaster, who published an epic poem, entitled *Fingal*, which was supposed to be a translation of Ossian, a Gaelic bard of the third century. It created a sensation and although Johnson and others declared it a forgery it was never really proved such. Surprisingly enough he was buried in Westminster Abbey. For letter which Johnson wrote to Macpherson see page 151.

31. Kenricks . . . Hendersons: Scotchmen who attacked Johnson. Kenrick attacked his Shakespeare, Campbell his style, and the last two his *Journey.*

PAGE **44**, LINE **9**. **Maxime . . . tecum**: "I desire especially, if you are willing, to contend with you."

22. Bentley (1662–1742): Richard Bentley was the greatest English scholar of his time. He was master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

PAGE **45**, LINE **9**. **Almon and Stockdale**: booksellers and publishers.

Taxation No Tyranny: The whole title is *Taxation No Tyranny, an Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress.* Even Boswell objected to this and writes: "The extreme violence which it breathed, appeared

to me so unsuitable to the mildness of a Christian philosopher . . . that I was sorry to see him appear in so unfavorable a light." The following sentence from the pamphlet will show its character. In referring to Samuel Adams and John Hancock, Johnson says: "Probably in America, as in other places, the chiefs are incendiaries, that hope to rob in the tumults of a conflagration, and toss brands among a rabble passively combustible."

PAGE **46**, LINE **7**. **Sheridan** (1751–1816) Richard Brinsley Sheridan, a famous dramatist whose plays, *The Rivals* and *A School for Scandal*, are still very popular. He was also one of the best political speakers of his day.

9. Wilson (1714–1782): Richard Wilson was one of the greatest of English landscape painters. He was also one of the founders of the Royal Academy.

17. Cowley: Abraham Cowley was, in the period in which he lived, the age of Milton, the most popular poet of England. Milton and Dryden both praised him as did Johnson, although by Johnson's time he had gone out of fashion.

22. Restoration: the name of the period of Charles II, who was restored to the throne of England after the period of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. Look up this period in any English history.

25. Grub Street: See note on page 199.

28. Gilbert Walmesley: See note on page 189.

29. Button's: a coffee-house kept by an old servant of Addison's and frequented by Addison, Steele, and their friends.

Cibber: an old actor and dramatist, who made over plays. He was poet-laureate in 1730.

30. Orrery: Earl of Orrery published a work on Swift.

31. Savage . . . Pope: See note on page 199. Savage supplied Pope with personal details that added point to the *Dunciad*.

PAGE **48**, LINE **12**. **Gray** (1716–1771): Thomas Gray lived at the same time with Johnson, but they never met.

He was the author of *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

16. Malone: Edmond Malone was a noted critic and scholar. He was especially famous for his edition of Shakespeare. His intimacy with Johnson, Boswell, and others of the *Club* caused him to be of great assistance to Boswell in the *Life of Johnson*.

27. unlucky . . . bargains: Johnson received four hundred guineas for this work and said that he was satisfied, but reference to sums paid even to his contemporaries shows that he never received enough. You might find it interesting to compare these sums with those paid to modern writers.

31. Robertson (1721–1793): William Robertson, a great Scottish historian, whose best work was the *History of Emperor Charles V*. His style was largely influenced by Johnson's.

PAGE **49**, LINE **16**. **regretted**: missed.

PAGE **50**, LINE **3**. **soon . . . Brescia**: Mrs. Thrale married Gabriel Piozzi three years after Mr. Thrale's death. According to the Encyclopædia Britannica, he was a talented violinist from Brescia in Italy, who was also a gentleman. He proved to be the kindest of husbands and gave his wife the most tender care. Their marriage proved to be supremely happy. Some very interesting letters passed between Johnson and Mrs. Thrale at this time. After their marriage the Piozzis lived in Italy, where Mrs. Piozzi in 1786 published her *Anecdotes of Johnson* and later, on their return to England, her *Letters of Johnson*. Macaulay has been severely criticised for his harsh judgment of her.

20. In . . . prayer: This prayer can be given from Boswell. See page 106.

25. few and evil days: about a year.

PAGE **51**, LINE **4**. **fiddler**: an unjust term, for Piozzi was an accomplished violinist.

7. Ephesian Matron: This story is found in the third satire of Petronius and is summarized by Jeremy Taylor in *Holy Dying*. *The matron* was mourning her husband at the vault where she intended to weep herself to death. A soldier on guard offered her refreshment and sympathy, whereupon she fell in love with him and married him the next day.

two pictures in *Hamlet*: An allusion to Act III, Scene IV of *Hamlet* where Hamlet shows his mother the difference between his father, her dead husband, and his uncle, whom she married immediately after her husband's death.

> "Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
> The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
> See what a grace was seated on this brow;
> Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
> . . . . . .
> Look you now what follows:
> Here is your husband; like a mildewed ear,
> Blasting his wholesome brother."

13. Mont Cenis: about the only road at this time across the Alps from France into Italy.

24. fear . . . journey: It was natural for Johnson to be careful, almost penurious, in his later life. He had not forgotten the terrible poverty of the days of his youth. At his death he left an estate of £2300.

PAGE **52**, LINE **13. Windham**: William Windham was a politician and orator, who was a friend of Johnson's and a member of the *Club*.

15. Frances Burney (1752–1840): better known as Madame D'Arblay, the author of the novel, *Evelina*. She was the first great woman novelist. After her death her *Diary and Letters* was published and was so successful and valuable that Macaulay wrote his *Essay on Madame D'Arblay*.

28. Westminster Abbey: This famous church was founded by Edward the Confessor and enlarged by various kings.

The most famous Englishmen are buried within it, and it has long been considered the greatest honor that can be paid to a literary man to be laid to rest in Poets' Corner of the Abbey. When you visit the Abbey, you will see Johnson's name between those of Garrick and Sir Henry Irving at the foot of the memorial to Shakespeare.

29. Cowley . . . Addison: All these men lie near Johnson in Poets' Corner.

GLOSSARY OF DIFFICULT WORDS IN MACAULAY'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

abject: ignoble
absent: inattentive
absolving: freeing
absurdity: foolishness
academical degree: grade or rank to which students are admitted by a college or university, according to their attainment
acidulated: soured
acuteness: shrewdness
adhered: stuck to
adjured: entreated earnestly
adulation: flattery
adversity: misfortune
affability: courtesy
affronts: insults
aggravation: making worse
alamode beef: beef stewed with spices and vegetables
alliteration: repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of two or more successive words or at brief intervals
alloy: something which lessens the value
altercation: angry dispute
amicable: friendly
anfractuosities: full of windings and turnings
anonymous: of unknown or unavowed authorship
anticipated: foresaw
apothegm: a brief, pointed saying conveying some important truth
appeased: pacified

apprehended: recognized
arduous: laborious
artifice: trick
ascendency: power or authority
ascribed: attributed to
aspirant: one who seeks some high object
asthmatic: referring to asthma, a disease which causes difficulty in breathing
audacity: boldness
aversion: dislike

blear-eyed: dim-sighted
bled: let blood, a medical cure, practised at that time

casuistry: science of determining questions of right and wrong in conduct
catchpenny: made to attract the attention of the ignorant and to get their money
catechising: questioning
censure: criticism of an adverse kind
ceruse: painted
chaplain: a clergyman, officially attached to the court
cited: quoted
civility: courtesy
colloquial: conversational
commentators: critics or those who make comments on literary productions
commissioners: persons appointed by the government to perform some business
conclave: secret meeting
conjectural: drawing conclusions from some evidence; guessed at
conjuncture: particular state of affairs; moment
controversialist: debater or disputant
controversy: dispute
contumelious: insolent
con'versant: well-informed

copyright: exclusive right to publish and sell literary productions. In Johnson's time copyright provisions gave an author exclusive right to his productions for fifteen years, which could be renewed at the end of that period for fourteen years. Johnson favored a much longer period.
cormorant: a sea-bird which has become the emblem of gluttony because it devours fish so voraciously
couplets: two successive lines of verse which rhyme
coxcomb: a conceited man
cynic: a person who believes that human conduct is directed wholly by self-interest

delicacy: refinement
dependence: inability to support one's self
dependents: those supported by others
deputed: appointed
destiny: fate
desultory: disconnected
detractors: slanderers
diction: choice of words
diocese: a district in which a bishop has authority
discernible: evident
discerning: shrewd
discernment: power of the mind by which it distinguishes one thing from another; insight
disciple: one who learns from another; a follower of one whose beliefs he admires; a pupil
dis'putant: one who disputes or argues
dissenters: those who do not accept the doctrines of the Church of England
dissertation: elaborate essay
divines: clergymen
doggedly: persistently
dynasty: a succession of kings of the same line or family

eccentric: peculiar
eccentricities: peculiarities

ecclesiastical: belonging to the church
effigy: statue
egotism: love of self
emendation: critical alteration
eminent: distinguished
endearments: caresses
enumeration: a detailed account
envious: jealous
epithet: an adjective fitly used to describe its noun
erroneous: mistaken
estimable: worthy of respect
estranged: alienated or separated
etymologist: a student of the origins of words
eulogy: praise
excise: an internal tax raised chiefly on foodstuffs
ex'quisitely: delicately
ex'tant: still in existence

faculties: powers of the mind
fancy: imagination
fastidious: critical
felons: criminal
felony: crime
ferocity: fury
flippancy: silliness
flying: scattered
folio: a book made of sheets folded once, making two leaves or four pages; hence, a very large book
formidable: dreaded
furious: violent

garrulous: talkative
gesticulations: expressive motions of body or limbs; hence *gestures*
glass house: green-house
goad: a pointed rod used to urge on a beast. Here it means *spur*

gorged: overfed
graciously: with tact
grimaces: distortions of the face
grosser: duller
guineas: an English gold coin issued 1663 to 1813 worth $5.11

hack: a literary drudge hired to do specified work
happy: fitting
haranguing: addressing loudly
harems: apartments of the women among the Mohammedans
hereditary: inherited
humiliations: mortifications
hypochondriac: one who has a morbid anxiety about his health

idolater: a great admirer
imbibing: absorbing
impaired: weakened
impediment: obstacle
importuned: begged
import: tax
impostor: pretender
incisions: cuttings
indis'putable: not to be disputed
indissoluble: not to be broken
inevitable: unavoidable
ingenious: intelligent
intelligible: clear
invective: abuse

labyrinth: puzzling arrangement
lamentation: sorrowing
letters: literature or learning
lexicographer: an author of a dictionary
liberal: independent
lofty: noble
longevity: old age

malevolent: spiteful
mangled: torn in cutting
mannerism: affectation
massy: bulky
maundered: muttered
meager: scanty in ideas
medium: substance between
mendicants: beggars
metaphysical: studying workings of the mind
mimic: actor
mitigated: lessened
momentous: very important
moralist: a writer of essays intended to teach a great lesson. A teacher of morals
morbid: unwholesome
morose: surly
munificently: lavishly
mutilated: removed a part of

noisome: disgusting
novice: beginner

oblivion: forgetfulness
obloquy: abuse
obviously: evidently
ogre: any frightful giant
opulent: wealthy
oracle: a person who is an authority on a subject
ordinaries: restaurants
orthodoxy: accepted standards
overtures: offers

pagan: not Christian
palm: prize or victory
pamphleteers: writers of pamphlets, usually scorned in Johnson's time
parish vaults: a burial place supplied by the parish or church district

partisan: unreasoning supporter
parts: capability
pecuniary: financial
pedant: one who makes a display of knowledge
penitent: repentant
pertinacious: unyielding
perturbed: disturbed
perused: read carefully
pettishness: fretfulness
petty: inferior
petulant: irritable
pilloried: punished with the pillory, which was a frame of adjustable boards, erected on a post, with holes through which the head and hands were thrust
pirated: published without proper authority
pittance: a small sum of money
plate: silver tableware
pleasantry: good-humored banter or teasing
poetaster: an inferior writer of verse
pointed: keen
policy: system of government
polygamy: practice of having several wives at the same time
pompous: being excessively self-important
pore: to be absorbed in
pound: a British gold coin equivalent to about $4.86 in U. S. money
precedence: superiority
preceptor: teacher
precision: exactness
pre-eminently: exceedingly well; beyond others
printer's devil: an apprentice in a printer's shop, who does errands and who often gets very black with printer's ink; hence the name
privations: sufferings because of need
procrastination: putting off or delaying from day to day
prodigy: a person out of the ordinary; a marvel
proficiency: skill

profusion: extravagance
propensity: inclination
propitiation: conciliation
propounded: proposed
proprieties: fitness or appropriateness
prospectus: a preliminary statement of the plan of a literary work
provincial: countrified or unpolished
provokingly: exciting anger
puff: call attention to by praise
purse-proud: proud because of wealth

quadrangle: a square court surrounded by buildings; also the buildings themselves
quarto: having four leaves to the sheet

rancid: having a strong taste
rapacious: greedy or grasping
rational: intelligent
ravenous: greedy
reciprocate: to give in return
rectors: clergymen
refracted: turned from a direct course
refutation: disproof; act of overthrowing arguments by proof
registrar: keeper of records
regretted: missed with sorrow
reiterated: repeated
remunerated: rewarded
renegade: a deserter from a cause; a traitor
repelled: drove back; repulsed
requited: rewarded; repaid
reviled: abused
rigid: strict

sacrament: ceremony of the church known as communion or celebration of the Lord's Supper
sate: old form of *sat*

satirical: cutting or sharp
satirist: a writer who ridicules public or private abuses with a view to changing them for the better
scrofulous: having scrofula, a disease of the skin and glands
scruples: doubts
scurrilous: insulting
sensibility: taste or feeling
septennial: lasting seven years
servile: meanly submissive or cringing
sheriff's officer: really a policeman sent by the sheriff, who is the chief executive officer of a shire, and administers the laws
ship money: a tax levied on English ports and towns to buy ships for defense of the realm. It was abolished in 1640.
shrewd: knowing
signally: strikingly
sīnecure: an easy position
singular: unusual
sixpenny worth: worth a sixpence, which is an English coin worth about twelve cents. The expression means, then, *of little value*
sloth: laziness
sloven: a person of very untidy habits
sluggishness: indolence
sonorous: impressive in sound
sophistry: false reasoning
sot: drunkard
specific: remedy
speculations: results of careful study
squalid: dirty
stipend: pay agreed upon for services
stipulated: made an agreement
stock-jobbers: stock-brokers, used contemptuously here
stomacher: an ornamental covering for the front of the dress
sublimity: noble style
subscription: books were sometimes published by getting pledges enough in advance to pay for the printing and issuing

subterranean: situated in cellars
superfluities: luxuries
sycophancy: humble flattery

theological: religious
torpid: dull
trammeled: hampered
transcription: copying
triads: in groups of three
turgid: pompous
two pence: two pence or four cents

uncouth: awkward
unfeigned: sincere
unpalatable: unpleasing
usher: an assistant teacher

vagrant: unsettled
vehemently: violently
versification: art of making verses
vicissitudes: changes
volatile: changeable

waiting-woman: an attendant on nobility
winning affability: charming courtesy
wrangle: dispute

zealot: an over-enthusiastic supporter of a cause
zealous: enthusiastic

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